TYNESIDE 1939-1945:

A STUDY OF THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF TOTAL WAR

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Abstract

Accounts of the wartime experience in Britain's provinces remain few in number and, given the importance of the area to the war effort, a study of Tyneside during this period of national crisis is long overdue. Following a brief introduction which attempts to ground the thesis in a framework and to consider the historiography of this topic, the first chapter consists of a background study outlining the continuing importance of Tyneside to the national war effort. This focuses attention on the significance of the area's heavy industry, especially shipbuilding, armament production, engineering, and coal mining. Having established the vital nature of the area to the war effort chapter two considers the industries that were present on Tyneside. This is a wide ranging study which includes analysis of corruption, industrial disharmony, managerial structures, and the effects of wartime restrictions on industrial development.

The central chapters in the thesis deal with the organisations that were created to provide protection from enemy aerial attack and from invasion. As such they include sections dealing with, amongst others, the Warden Service and the Home Guard.

Chapters five and six are interlinked in that they deal with the reactions of the Tyneside public to the war. This includes, but is not limited to, sections dealing with evacuation, internment and alien policy, putatively bad behaviour (such as criminal activity), the upkeep and analysis of morale, and the impact of the air raids on Tyneside. A final conclusion follows chapter six and outlines areas in which further study would be beneficial, along with attempting to provide a description of the factors that faced the area at the conclusion of the war, including the impact of the

war on local politics. This section also attempts to draw together previous arguments and to locate the study into a national framework.

Glossary

AFS – Auxiliary Fire Service.

ARP – Air Raid Precautions.

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation.

BCP – British Communist Party.

BMA – British Medical Association.

BUF – British Union of Fascists.

ILP – Independent Labour Party.

IWM – Imperial War Museum.

LDV – Local Defence Volunteers.

MO – Mass Observation.

NA – National Archive.

NFS – National Fire Service.

NPL – Newcastle Public Library.

NRO – Northumberland Records Office.

NSL – North Shields Public Library: Local History Section.

NSSL – National Shipbuilders Security Limited.

NA – National Archives.

RCP – Revolutionary Communist Party.

TAG – Tyneside Apprentice's Guild.

TWAS – Tyne & Wear Archive Service.

WIL – Workers International League.

WVS – Women's Voluntary Service.

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Introduction

For the British, the Second World War had been the 'People's War', and the future peace was to be the 'peoples' too. Many of the subsequent histories were unsurprisingly positive in their outlook. The end of the First World War had been characterised by a severe economic downturn contrasting with a sense of public optimism, one which was soon to be bitterly disappointed. Conversely, the cessation of the Second World War was met with no such economic slump. The greater social awareness engendered by many aspects of the conflict ensured that post-war governments were forced to devote a great deal of time, money, and energy in improving the social and working conditions of the masses. The war, through "Education in the forces and self-education in the air-raid shelters had assisted the developing consciousness of the inarticulate."[1] A majority of Britons became more politically aware, or at least more willing to be politically involved. There were also more who new exactly what they "expected of a modern civilized industrial society: decent living standards, income and health security, a taste of the modest luxuries of life".[2] This new-found awareness permeated class barriers ranged from the working-class family huddled in their air raid shelter, to the likes of Wing Commander Guy Gibson, who reflected as early as 1943 that "We must learn about politics. We must vote for the right things, and not necessarily the traditional things. We want to see our country remain as great as it is to-day – forever. It all depends on the people".[3] The very fact that people were increasingly becoming aware of these issues and their own

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[1] Marwick, A, *Britain in the Century of Total War. War, Peace & Social Change 1900-1967* (London: Bodley Head, 1968), p 322.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Gibson, G, *Enemy Coast Ahead* (London: Goodall, 1990), p 286.

ability to shape the future was in itself an agent, and an example of, social change. This emotion permeated through to many of the historians who researched the period.

The association of war with social change is far from original but most of the currently accepted theories on the subject stem from the works of historians who were working post-1945. The foremost post-war social researcher to secure acceptance of the thesis of war as a factor effecting social change was Richard Titmuss.[4] Over recent decades opposing views have been proposed to counter this thesis. According to Titmuss, the introduction of wartime welfare care and the Beveridge Report, in conjunction with the Labour General Election victory of 1945, showed that there was a radical change in public attitudes brought about as a result of wartime experiences. Titmuss' thesis focused on formal intervention at a central governmental level as being the most influential factor in the development of social policy and change. His central idea was that many wartime factors, especially the evacuation experience, acted as catalysts on social policy planning and created a wartime consensus of reformist fervour.[5]

Amongst the theses to be developed in an attempt to explain why social change should be associated with war is the military participation ratio, as espoused by the sociologist, Stanislaw Andreski.[6] The military participation ratio advocates that, in a Total War, hitherto powerless sections of society are empowered by wartime demands. In the case of twentieth century war this argument has been applied to the dependency on the working-class to provide necessary material and support for the war. Unfortunately there are several glaring weaknesses in this thesis: firstly, it assumes that the working-class is one united mass movement; secondly, the theory ignores the often strong conservatism and traditionalism that could be demonstrated

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[4] See Titmuss, R M, *Problems of Social Policy* (London: HMSO, 1950).
[5] *Ibid*, p 506.
[6] Andreski, S, *Military Organisation and Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954).

by the British working-class;[7] thirdly, the military participation ratio ignores any safeguards that may have been put in place by the governing classes to avoid social destabilisation. The fact that throughout the war, and indeed during the First World War, British workers railed against workforce dilution would appear to show a working-class that was divided. The military participation ratio is overly simplistic and is of limited use when attempting to explain the social changes which emerged in Britain from the two world wars. As early as 1968 Arthur Marwick was providing accounts of why this thesis was of limited, if any use.[8]

Later historians disagreed with this emphasis on official bodies and instead looked for other reasons for change. For example, Arthur Marwick focused more on unguided forces resulting in alterations in the social structure. He theorised that there were four separate and distinct dimensions in which war effected social change. These four aspects were the disruption and dislocation of pre-war processes and relationships, the resultant testing of existing institutions and enforced changes caused by these tests, the active participation of previously under-represented social groups due to their necessary participation in the war effort and the psychological and emotional impact that war has upon both individuals and larger social groupings.[9] Marwick argued that many of the changes that occur during wartime were spawned from reactionary and spontaneous social concerns and that the long-term consequences were unpredictable.

The Second World War has been widely accepted as being a defining moment in the history of Britain and in the identity of the British people. The reasoning behind this characterisation has varied and, furthermore, been altered by historians

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[7] DeGroot, G, *Blighty. British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London: Longman, 1996), pp xi-xiii.
[8] Marwick, A, *Britain in the Century of Total War*, pp 14-17.
[9] *Ibid*, pp 12-14.

and politicians since the end of the conflict, yet all agree that the war remains a seminal event in the British psyche. For many historians of the 1950s the war had been the moment when the British nation had rediscovered itself and the dismal shackles of the depression haunted inter-war years had been cast off.[10] For these observers the war was a catalyst that had shaken Britain from the semi-somnolent malaise which, they believed, had afflicted the country throughout the inter-war years. The war ensured that, once more, Britons were united, dynamic, and, above all, purposeful. Later historians, notably A J P Taylor, interpreted the war as being a defining event due to a perceived swelling of public awareness that occurred as a result of the conflict, for these historians "1945 was the critical, democratizing moment."[11]

The seminal work on Britain during the Second World War remains that of Angus Calder.[12] This work provides an admirably broad overview of the organisations, incidents, policies and attitudes of the time but deals largely with the nation as a single entity, with little emphasis on regional variations. Many of the views expressed in Calder's work have been challenged in recent years with arguments developing around the positive and negative examples of behaviour found amongst the general populace. During the past twenty years there have been several works that attempted to debunk the mythologized view of the British experience during the Second World War. This applies especially to the myths surrounding the blitz and the evacuation of Dunkirk.[13] It was, perhaps, inevitable that the country

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[10] Mowat, C L, *Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940* (London: Methuen, 1955), pp 656-657.
[11] Baxendale, J, "'You and I – All of Us Ordinary People': Renegotiating 'Britishness' in Wartime', in Hayes, N, and Hill, J (eds), *'Millions Like Us'? British Culture in the Second World War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p 297.
[12] Calder, A, *The People's War* (London: Pimlico, 1969).
[13] For example, see Calder, A, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 2002), also Hylton, S, *Their Darkest Hour. The Hidden History of the Home Front 1939-1945* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), Ponting, C, *1940. Myth and Reality* (London: Cardinal, 1991), and Harman, N, *Dunkirk. The Necessary Myth* (London: Coronet, 1981).

would become caught up in the propaganda attempts during the worst period of the war but there would appear to have been a deliberate attempt in subsequent years to propagate these myths. This can be partly explained by the need for a sense of national pride despite the diminishing importance of Britain on the post-war international stage.[14]

The myths and meanings of the war and, perhaps more importantly, their importance to the British public, have long been fought over, not only by historians but by politicians. The commonly expressed pre-war belief that the war had resulted in a victory for the left has been subsequently challenged in recent decades. It is inescapable that the end of the war did see the Labour landslide of 1945, the drive for the formation of the welfare state, and a shift in favour of a more protective and interventionist form of government. There was a perceptible drive, amongst politicians and people, for the ideals of creating a utopian New Jerusalem in post-war Britain.[15] It has been argued that these changes were not as radical as was assumed by immediate post-war historians. The streak of conservatism that permeated much of British society, reflected in the widely held opinion that Britain would continue to be a dominant and influential world power, was an ever-present in post-war British society. Indeed the vision of a New Jerusalem was hardly radical. As the historian Correlli Barnett has argued, the liberal establishment, which he blames for the ideals of New Jerusalem policies, "had been a hundred years and more in the making".[16] In recent decades the Conservative Party has attempted, in some cases successfully, to associate itself with the values of wartime Britain. That right and left wings of British politics have both 'claimed' the war is unsurprising. The importance of the Second

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[14] Black, J, and MacRaild, D M, *Studying History 2nd Edition* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p 7.
[15] Barnett, C, *The Audit of War. The Illusion & Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (London: Pan, 1996), p 11.
[16] *Ibid*, p 12. For a detailed discussion of the educational and social developments behind the dream of New Jerusalem see: Barnett, C, *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Pan, 2002).

World War to developing national identities and the political process in Britain cannot be overstated. It is true that "the people's war of 1940 was a constant point of political reference" until very recently.[17] Whilst memories of the war, and 1940 in particular, have always been a key factor in the myth of modern Britain, it is also true that differing political groups have emphasised different areas of the myths of the war, for example, emphasising the importance of the 'people' over the military. The spirit of 1940 is a long-lasting legacy in Britain. It was evoked throughout the Falklands War, in subsequent election campaigns, and, as recently, as 1999 William Hague reacted to Labour Party attacks by invoking his, as leader of the Conservatives, almost spiritual link to Winston Churchill and the 'People's War'.[18] The war resulted in a strange juxtaposition of identities: the majority wished for a New Jerusalem whilst wartime society continued to be dominated by traditional British culture and by a persistent national pride.

The positive view of the impact of the Second World War is challenged by those who seek to demonstrate the damage which the war, and planning for post-war society, had wrought on the country. Corelli Barnett agrees with Marwick that many of the changes that occurred during the war arose from reactionary and spontaneous social concerns but claims that the long-term impact on the country, far from being unpredictable, was plainly obvious. The war had bankrupted Britain by April 1941 to such an extent that its continuance was only made possible by American aid, provided under the Lease-Lend Act.[19] Not only had the war bankrupted the country but it had also led to the collapse of the all-important export trade and had forced the country into selling off valuable overseas assets in order to raise funds. In 1944 the total amount borrowed from abroad or sold off in overseas assets came to £655 million, an

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[17] Smith, M, *Britain and 1940. History, Myth and Popular Memory* (London: Routledge, 2000), p 111.
[18] *Ibid*, pp 111-129.
[19] Barnett, C, *The Audit of War*, p 38.

increase of 935% on the figure from 1938.[20] The penury of the country was widely publicised throughout the latter years of the war with a government white paper and extensive articles in journals and newspapers. Barnett argues that the policies of New Jerusalem that were being proposed, especially by the Labour Party, were ignorant of the harsh realities of the state of any post-war British economy. He further argues that politicians, including Liberals such as Beveridge, urged industrial and social reconstruction without considering how such policies could be paid for.[21] Despite these criticisms it is argued that those who were behind the New Jerusalem policies acted honestly but were fooling themselves due to their romantic outlook on life.

Recent years have seen the balance of the historical argument swing back in favour of the more positive view of the 'People's War'. Several recently published books have portrayed the negativity surrounding aspects of behaviour such as crime and profiteering as being overly emphasised. They reiterate the more traditional view that the vast majority of Britons were indeed steadfast, loyal, and committed to making personal sacrifices in the name of the war against Hitler.[22]

Tyneside's experience of war during the period 1939 to 1945 was as unique as it was important. As a major industrial area, specialising in shipbuilding and armaments production, the importance of the region to the national war effort cannot be overstated. Indeed, this significance was recognised by the German government as well as in this country. The area was mentioned in one of Hitler's war directives as a strategically vital target whilst the crucial nature of the area was stressed in German

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[20] *Ibid*, p 39.
[21] *Ibid*, pp 40-43.
[22] See, for example, MacKay, R, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale an Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), and, by the same author, *The Test of War: Inside Britain 1939-45* (London: University College London Press, 1999).

radio broadcasts.[23] Whilst the saturation bombing that was expected did not develop, there was indeed heavy and in some cases sustained aerial attack on the area. For such a nationally important area for the war effort Tyneside, and indeed the people of Tyneside, received scant recognition for the contribution that they made to the war effort. Indeed there were complaints throughout the earlier years of the war that Tyneside was receiving less protection than other 'less vital' areas of the country.

The region played an increasingly large role in the replacement of vital war material, especially shipping and heavy weaponry, lost due to enemy action. The shipyards of north-eastern England replaced over half of the four million tons of British shipping lost during the course of the conflict. Without this contribution it is likely that the battle of the Atlantic would have been lost, or at least extended in duration, and much needed supplies would have failed to reach Britain. It is perhaps fitting that many of the ships that merchant seamen from the area lost their lives on were built in or near their own hometowns. Many of these merchant seamen lost their lives ferrying vital supplies, such as locally produced coal and steel, from Tyneside to London as can be seen in this quotation from comic Ernie Wise when considering his own wartime service. "Though the Merchant Navy didn't have the glamorous image of its Royal counterpart, it was suffering fantastic casualties performing its part in the war effort – ferrying essential supplies to the capital, it was the constant target of air and sea attack, and on my particular run an awful lot of people, especially Tynesiders, lost their lives."[24]

Tyneside was also an important military base, especially for naval forces. The area off the North East coast came under the command of the Royal Navy's Tyne Sub-Command, itself a part of the larger Rosyth Command. By the summer of 1940

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[23] North East Diary 1939-1945 website [http://www.bpears.org.uk/NE-Diary/], 2003.
[24] *Ibid.*

there were twelve destroyers and a cruiser, the *HMS Coventry*, based in the Tyne. This was in addition to large coastal forces consisting of mine sweepers, armed trawlers, motor torpedo boats and so on. Whilst at Blyth, in Northumberland, there was a major Royal Navy submarine base.

Tyneside had a peculiar, and important, role in British wartime society. Its economy was largely based upon armaments, shipbuilding and mineral production industries. All of which were vital to the success of the war effort. It was assumed that important industrial centres, especially Tyneside, would be vulnerable to air attack. Efforts to build up an emergent aircraft industry on Tyneside met with a lack of official support due to the area's vulnerability. Britain's wartime aircraft production facilities were instead centred on, although not restricted to, Coventry. It was envisaged that special measures would need to be put in place to provide protection from air attack. As early as 1938 the Chief Constable of Newcastle Police, Mr F J Crawley, was concerned with the probable requirement of special provisions stating, "Owing to the accessibility of the River Tyne and the importance of this area as an arsenal, Tyneside can be regarded as an important military objective and special measures will be required to meet possible air attack."[25]

The industrial, military, and civilian contributions that Tyneside made to the national war effort make a study of the area during the period long overdue. In order to anchor the study into the national experience it is necessary to look at the area in relation to other parts of Britain. Comparative techniques allowed me to draw out the unique qualities that were present on Tyneside during the war and also enable us to evaluate how appropriate the national perspective of the war is when dealing with

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[25] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP), May 13th 1938, p 61.

isolated, but strategically important, regions and Tyneside was, indeed, isolated both in a geographical and industrial sense, from the heart of British government.

The majority of the previously completed studies of the Second World War have concentrated on the national experience as a whole and have as such been general interpretations of the period. Others have focused on tightly knit, yet isolated, topics within the period. For example, evacuation,[26] specific bombing incidents,[27] or the home guard have all attracted significant research attention.[28] Few studies have considered the variances that existed across different regions or even in different towns.[29] Where regional research has been performed it is largely restricted to the capital or to areas which experienced significant upheaval due to enemy bombing, such as Coventry.[30] Studies of the provinces during the war, and especially during the blitz period, remain "almost non-existent."[31] This is a problem that was highlighted by Calder during the 1960s but has yet to be resolved by sufficient research.[32]

Thus, this research is important in that it focuses on a tightly knit, yet diverse, area that was possessed of a strong regional identity. Whilst there have been studies of the social and economic effect of the war these have tended to concentrate solely on the national experience; there has been little research carried out on the consequences of the war in specific localities. Tyneside is an interesting area for such research as it was so dependent on the armaments manufacturing industry and had a

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[26] For example, see Brown, M, *Evacuees: Evacuation in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), and Crosby, T C, *The Impact of Civilian Evacuation in WW2* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).
[27] For example, see Longmate, N, *Air Raid* (London: Hutchinson, 1976).
[28] For example, see MacKenzie, S P, *The Home Guard. A Military and Political History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[29] For a study of the Midlands, see Thoms, D, *War, Industry and Society* (London: Routledge, 1989). The most recent regional study, although it considers both the First and Second World Wars, is probably Osborne, B D, and Armstrong, R, *Glasgow. A City at War* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003).
[30] See Lancaster, B, and Mason, T, *Life & Labour in a 20th Century City. The Experience of Coventry* (Coventry: Cryfield Press, 1992).
[31] Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 630.
[32] *Ibid.*

strong military tradition of service. This research considers the broader social and economic impact of the war on a locality and, as such, is vital to our understanding of how the effects and interpretations of war can vary, even within national boundaries.

Much of this research deals with the events on wartime Tyneside from the perspective of the 'ordinary' people who lived and worked in the region. As such it has much in common with the latter generations of the Annales School of History. The third generation demonstrated the importance of regional studies and strongly influenced the study of regional history in Britain.[33] The combined approach of studying microhistories with the openness to histories of mentalities is vital when considering the impact of a 'Total War' on a complex 20th Century society. Such methodologies did not become popular in Britain until after the end of the Second World War. Together with the 'New Social History' that penetrated British historical thought during the 1960s the field of historical study was widened to include people who had previously been sidelined as unimportant. The popular perspective of the war makes such a method very apt. The war became accepted as the 'People's War' and has attained a special place in the defining of the nation's 20th Century character, and in interpretations of popular history. As a 'Total War' the conflict involved every aspect of British society and, it has been claimed, acted to break down the traditional class barriers that had permeated British life. The people of Britain became every bit as important, if not more so, than the institutions that controlled policy decisions. For this reason Second World War Britain lends itself to a study from 'below'.[34]

Amongst the new branches of history that achieved popularity in Britain during the 1960s was the field of oral history. Accounts from eye-witnesses have

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[33] See Marwick, A, *The New Nature of History. Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp 88-96.
[34] See Sharpe, J, 'History from Below', in Burke, P (ed), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing 2nd Edition* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), pp 25-42.

played a substantial part in my early research but the field is pitted with dangers. The accounts given must be, whenever possible, validated by other evidence. Oral sources cannot be entirely depended on and are often seen as being "second best" when compared to written, official, records.[35] Accurate recall of sometimes traumatic events can be problematic in the immediate aftermath, let alone after fifty or more years, whilst the experience of one witness may not be representative of the majority.[36] Memories are often also more involved with the relationship between memory, identity and national mythology.[37] Critics of oral history dismiss the field by criticising its usefulness, importance and accuracy. To these historians, oral history "tells us only trivia about important people and important things (by their own lights) about trivial people."[38] When looking at historical documents historians commonly look for three qualities: stability of form; chronological exactness; and supporting evidence.[39] Critics claim that oral history is of limited value because oral testimony is simply representative of one, often minor, individual.

In the case of Second World War Britain, however, the involvement of every individual in the war effort to some extent means that every testimony can be viewed as important. Unfortunately, the myth of wartime Britain has served to colour a large proportion of oral testimony. The overall impact of these myths on British identity was readily identifiable in many of the interviews that I carried out and, whilst clichés become such because of a commonality of experience, some related events were contradicted by other, documentary, evidence. Whilst this could, and did, result in

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[35] Prins, G, 'Oral History', in Burke, P (ed), *New Perspectives*, p 121.
[36] Perks, R, and Thomson, A (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp 273-283 and pp 320-332. Also see Thompson, P, *The Voice of the Past. Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), or Prins, G, 'Oral History' in Burke, P (ed), *New Perspectives*, pp 120-156.
[37] For an example see Thomson, A, 'Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia', in Green, A, and Troup, K, *The houses of history. A critical reader in twentieth-century history and theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp 239-252.
[38] Prins, G, 'Oral History', in Burke, P (ed), *New Perspectives*, p 126.
[39] *Ibid*, pp 125-126.

some interview accounts being less than correct in historical detail the method still proved useful when considering the question of how people had come to view the war and their part in it. It is true that many people had had indeed created a "usable past ... through adjusting the sequence of events to fit an overall narrative", often resulting in a conflict with documentary sources.[40] Myth can indeed be a "pervasive influence" on oral evidence and it is studying the process of memory, from actual events to, in the case of Second World War Britain, national consensus that oral history is most important.[41]

Throughout my research I carried out interviews with several people who had memories of wartime Tyneside. In addition to this I also received written accounts of memories in response to general appeals for information and information from a local library club. Fortuitously, a local newspaper was also preparing a supplement on the war and the local history reporter from that newspaper generously agreed to furnish me with the letters that he had received.[42] In total, combining both oral interviewees and correspondents, the accounts of some 70 people were gathered. These ranged from childhood memories to those of young adults. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to obtain accounts from those who were more mature during the war (someone who was 30 in 1940 would now be aged 95). This is another limiting factor that ensured that, whilst important, oral histories were not a major plank of my work. It rapidly became clear to me that many of the accounts that I was receiving, whilst given in good faith, were prejudiced by the myths that have taken root around our popular conceptions of the home front during the Second World War. Even recollections from the time can prove to be suspect due to the emotional state of the contributors or

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[40] Green, A, and Troup, K, *The houses of history*, p 234.
[41] *Ibid*, p 235.
[42] Details can be found in the Bibliography and, when used directly in the main text, in footnotes. I am indebted to Ray Marshall for permission to use letters sent to him in his capacity of local history reporter at the *Evening Chronicle*.

to the fact that many people often said what they thought they ought to. Many of these accounts were subsequently disproved by studies of the available archival material. Those that did prove useful in this research were carefully checked against all the known primary evidence of the event.

The foundation of any research is the availability of relevant sources. Fortunately, there are a large number of archival materials available for this period of British history. The availability of sources becomes all the more important when undertaking research in local history.[43] As an area, Tyneside is rich in such source material. Local archives contain many of the papers produced by local authorities during the war and range from intelligence reports estimating the state of civilian morale to memoranda sent out to local ARP wardens. The papers of various trade organisations and private companies are also often to be found in local archives and these have presented me with the opportunity to consider the wartime situation on Tyneside from the point of view of a variety of professions, ranging from butchers to shipbuilding and armaments magnates. Despite the substantial regional autonomy that was gained by local authorities during the war the influence of central government remained important. For this reason specific papers contained within the National Archives at Kew have proven invaluable when looking to compare and contrast the opinions that existed on Tyneside and in Whitehall. General statistical evidence proved useful when considering the impact of the war upon Tyneside industry and, whilst newspaper articles and photographs also proved useful they were treated with considerable caution due to the problems that are involved in the interpretation of such sources.

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[43] Black, J, and MacRaild, D M, *Studying History*, pp 93-95.

The definition of what exactly constitutes a 'Total War' has vexed many historians. In this thesis, 'Total War' denotes a conflict that necessitates the mobilisation of the vast majority of the population of a country to take part in either armed service or civilian work vital to the war effort. As well as this, a Total War can be said to involve the deliberate targeting of the civilian population by an enemy, thus placing them in the front line. An essential war aim of Total War, however, is to degrade morale and to reduce the ability of a country to prosecute the war successfully. Churchill believed the Second World War to be a 'Total War' as every member of the population, regardless of gender or age, was a part of the unified national war effort.[44] The role of women, especially in the field of work, has been examined by several historians, most notably Penny Summerfield.[45] These fail to analyse regional variations and are of limited use in a local study. Their best use is in contrasting what has come to be seen as the 'national norm' with regional distinctions.

Historians have argued that the Total Wars of the twentieth century both led to a corresponding shift in the social structures of Britain. The extent to which these conflicts instigated a restructuring of the political and social concerns of the populace has also been the subject of debate. The long-term effect of these changes, especially those brought about during the First World War, has been questioned in recent years with one historian, facetiously playing with Trotsky's locomotive of history theory,[46] claiming that "If war is the locomotive of history, the rolling stock in this case was typically British: slow, outmoded and prone to delay and cancellation."[47]

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[44] Calder, A, *The People's War*, pp 31-32.
[45] See: Summerfield, P, *Women Workers in the Second World War. Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), also, Summerfield, P, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).
[46] See Marwick, A, *Britain in the Century of Total War*, pp 12-14.
[47] DeGroot, G, *Blighty*, p 311.

The greatest difference between the Second World War and those preceding it was in the level of commitment expected of the civilian population. The war required massive mobilisation of all forms of labour and increased levels of regulations to govern a greatly expanded, and unwieldy, labour force. The population of Tyneside was exposed to severe bombing, which led to higher civilian casualty figures than had ever been experienced before. It is worth noting that national casualties, more than 60,000 killed and over 80,000 injured,[48] were not as severe as pre-war experts had predicted, though these figures do not include more than 45,000 merchant seamen and fishermen that were killed as a result of enemy action,[49] a point which impacted greatly on Tyneside.

The authorities, as well as the populace, feared a mass bombing campaign and had begun to prepare for it well in advance of war being declared. Their plans included the evacuation of all children, parents with young children, and the infirm, from urban conurbations to rural areas where it was expected that bombing would be less severe. There was a great fear that an enemy would also utilise poison gas during future bombing raids. This led to several documented false alarms during or after raids had taken place.[50] The experience of being bombed was to characterise the British people's attitude towards the war. In order to prevent accurate bombing of the urban population greater powers were given to the police, and to the Warden's Service, to enforce blackout regulations, and there were occasional problems caused by over-rigorous application of these regulations: one Tyneside policeman cautioning

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[48] Winter, J M, 'The Demographic Consequences of the War', in Smith, H L, *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester University Press), 1986, p 163.
[49] Thorpe, A, *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Era of the Two World Wars 1914-45* (London: Longman, 1994) p 50.
[50] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Reporting on an incident that occurred on September 17th 1940.

his own mother over a breach of blackout regulations.[51] The preparedness of ARP measures varied nationally and the reactions of the populace to bombing also varied. The myth that everyone stoically 'took it' is explored in this thesis by considering the population of Tyneside as a whole.

Possibly the most visible, and, to those who were involved, the most memorable, result of early war air raid precautions policy was the evacuation scheme. "The early days of World War II will always be associated with the sight of British school children marching raggedly to train depots as they left the vulnerable cities ... in the face of threatened bombing raids by the Luftwaffe."[52] During the Munich Crisis of 1938 there was a rehearsal of the evacuation plan in some areas. Nevertheless, when the plan was implemented for real there were large-scale logistical problems. Despite the popularity of the plan on Tyneside, the scheme came in for much national criticism, and many of the local evacuees, an estimated 80% by 1940,[53] returned to their homes in the following weeks or months. The evacuation scheme also had an impact upon socio-political thought in Britain by revealing the levels of poverty that prevailed in many of the urban areas of Great Britain. This provided an added impetus to the demands for greater social service provision. Due to the popularity of the plan on Tyneside it is an eminently suitable area to choose for a case study of the evacuation system.

To counteract the threat of heavy air raids it was recognised that large numbers of voluntary air raid precaution workers would need to be recruited and fully trained at the commencement of hostilities. This force was realised well in advance of 1939, for Stanley Baldwin's government issued the first Air Raid Precautions

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[51] *Newcastle Evening Chronicle, Remember When: On the Home Front, supplement 4*, March 11th 2002, p 15.
[52] Crosby, T L, *The Impact of Civilian Evacuation*, p 1.
[53] MacNicol, J, 'The Effect of the Evacuation of Schoolchildren on Official Attitudes to State Intervention' in Smith, H L, *War and Social Change*, p 14.

Circular to the various local authorities in September 1935. The onus of providing ARP remained with the local authorities throughout the war. In April 1937 the Air Raid Wardens Service was formed and, a year later, this had recruited some 200,000 men. Auxiliary Firemen were also being recruited during this period, although training remained rudimentary at best. Police officers, and some local government workers, were trained in the methods of anti-gas warfare as a precautionary measure. During January 1939 a pamphlet was issued to every household cataloguing various full and part time war jobs, whilst, by midsummer, there were 1.5 million volunteers for the Civil Defence Services. In addition, it was necessary for the local authorities to arrange for the entire populace to be fitted for, and issued with respirators, a complicated and time consuming task.[54]

The demands placed upon Tyneside industry during the period far outstripped anything that had been experienced before. Domestic production was seen as important at the outset of the war, but by 1940 it was viewed as vital.[55] It was anticipated that the demand for workers would be much greater than during the First World War and that measures would have to be taken by central government to cope with this demand. There would be no repeat of the 'business as usual' policy of the First World War. There was also concern regarding the threat of industrial action. A fine balance was required between introducing new measures and the risk of undermining morale amongst the workers who saw their right to strike as sacrosanct.[56] This was in turn recognised by the government, not least in the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill of 1937, which was anxious not to provoke

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[54] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45), and MD/NC/127/1. Also, see Craven, P, 'Passive Air Defence in Great Britain, 1936-1939, the Production and Distribution of Gas Masks', unpublished MPhil, East Anglia, 1999.
[55] Stammers, N *Civil Liberties in Britain during the Second World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), p 195.
[56] *Ibid*, pp 195-197.

avoidable industrial action. This bill stated that there should be no provision that would limit or curtail the right of civilians to strike.[57] The upkeep of civilian and, more especially, the workers', morale became an issue of increasing importance throughout the war. This was not aided by the fact that football, which had long been a popular form of recreation on Tyneside, was severely curtailed by the war. Although some matches were staged crowds were limited, the wartime maximum was 15,000 in Newcastle but this often fell to 2,000, and the football league had been postponed for the duration of the war.[58]

As in the previous war it was envisaged that volunteers would desert their employers in order to join the armed forces. To prevent this problem a schedule of reserved occupations was announced in September 1938. This ensured that employers could hang on to skilled workers when their jobs were adjudged to be vital for the prosecution of the war. As skilled workers were to be in higher demand than before the war it was likely that wage demands would increase and that there would also be incidents of headhunting of skilled workers. To discourage this practice, legislation was introduced to limit the rights of workers to move from one employer to another.

All the adjustments necessary for the prosecution of a 'Total War' would disturb the social fabric of Tyneside. The lack of research dealing with the area during the war is surprising. Tyneside is ideal for the study of the implications of war on a region that was, prior to the war, in a transitional stage with traditional industries failing and large amounts of unemployment. The area also has a history of extensive participation in the armed forces and, due to its industrial importance, was expected to play a significant role in Britain's war effort.

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[57] *Ibid,* pp 195-196.
[58] Joannou, P, *United. The First 100 Years ... and More: The Official History of Newcastle United FC 1882 to 1995 (2nd Edition)* (Leicester: Polar Print, 1995), pp 167-171.

Chapter 1

The Arsenal Economy?

Pre-War Industrial Tyneside

By 1900, Tyneside had already established a world-wide renown as an area of heavy industry. This reputation was built around several key industries: coal mining, shipbuilding, heavy engineering, and armaments production. The trade was reliant upon overseas orders as well as home-based business. This was made possible by easy access to a major port. At the heart of this regional development was the River Tyne. The river provided access to overseas markets; its water was also a necessary material for many of the steel foundries and for the shipbuilding industry. Another driving factor helping to keep Tyneside industry at the forefront throughout this period was the bold and entrepreneurial spirit that had prevailed amongst the management community. The actions and abilities of local entrepreneurs were of great importance to the development of both Tyneside and Newcastle. A close-knit entrepreneurial elite controlled the types of development that succeeded in the area through their own creativity, business acumen, and monetary investment, and, whilst the debate over the decline in entrepreneurial ability continues to this day, it is clear that in this area the entrepreneurs were a key factor.[58]

The First World War had resulted in a huge increase in demand for additional shipping, both merchant and military, and the shipyards of the North East, with their skilled workers, made a massive contribution to the fulfilment of this demand.

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[58] Lendrum, O, 'An Integrated Elite. Newcastle's Economic Development 1840-1914', in Colls, R, and Lancaster, B, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, pp 27-28.

During this period the shipyards of the area were producing, on average, five ships every week. The total tonnage produced by North East yards during the war came to nearly 3,500,000 tons. All of this was achieved despite the severe drain of men leaving for service in the armed forces. At this time there were forty separate establishments repairing ships at forty-six dry docks. The importance of the ship repair yards, combined with new production, made the area's contribution one of the most strategically vital to the war effort. Over the course of the war almost 30,000 ships were repaired in the area, these ranged from tankers and cargo ships to the largest battleships and cruisers in the Royal Navy. The increased importance of the region was demonstrated in the comments made by John Meade Faulkner, then Chairman of Armstrong-Whitworth, who declared Tyneside to be "a Government arsenal under Governmental control".[59] Workers and management were well aware that this situation was unlikely to outlast the conflict. The cyclical nature of the shipbuilding and armaments industries upon which Tyneside was so dependent was nothing new: such conditions had existed since the late 19th century.[60] Indeed the government had become convinced that the major armaments manufacturers were so vital, as a national resource in times of war, that they were often persuaded to place orders when there was little demand and so fostered an often artificial level of profitability in the industry.[61] The sheer amount of industrial development on Tyneside can be seen on the two maps, dating from 1916, overleaf.[62]

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[59] Dougan, D, *The History of North East Shipbuilding* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), pp 135-136. Also Clarke, J F, *Building Ships on the North East Coast, a Labour of Love, Risk and Pain Vol 2:c1914-1980* (1979)

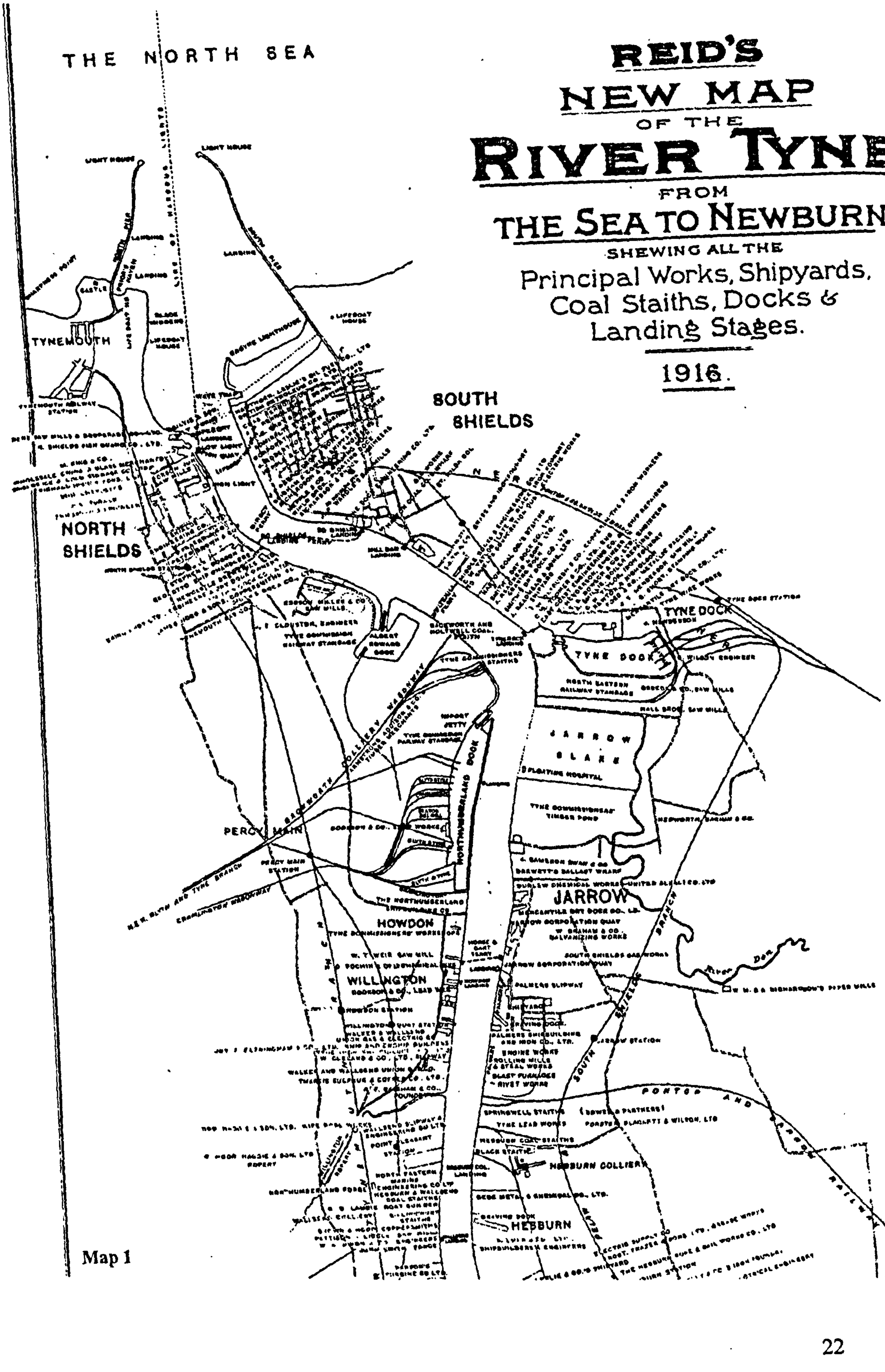
[60] Arnold, A J, 'Riches beyond the dreams of avarice'?: commercial returns on British warship construction, 1880-1914', *Economic History Review*, 104, 2 (2001), pp 267-289.

[61] Kaldor, M, *The Baroque Arsenal* (London: Abacus, 1983), p 24.

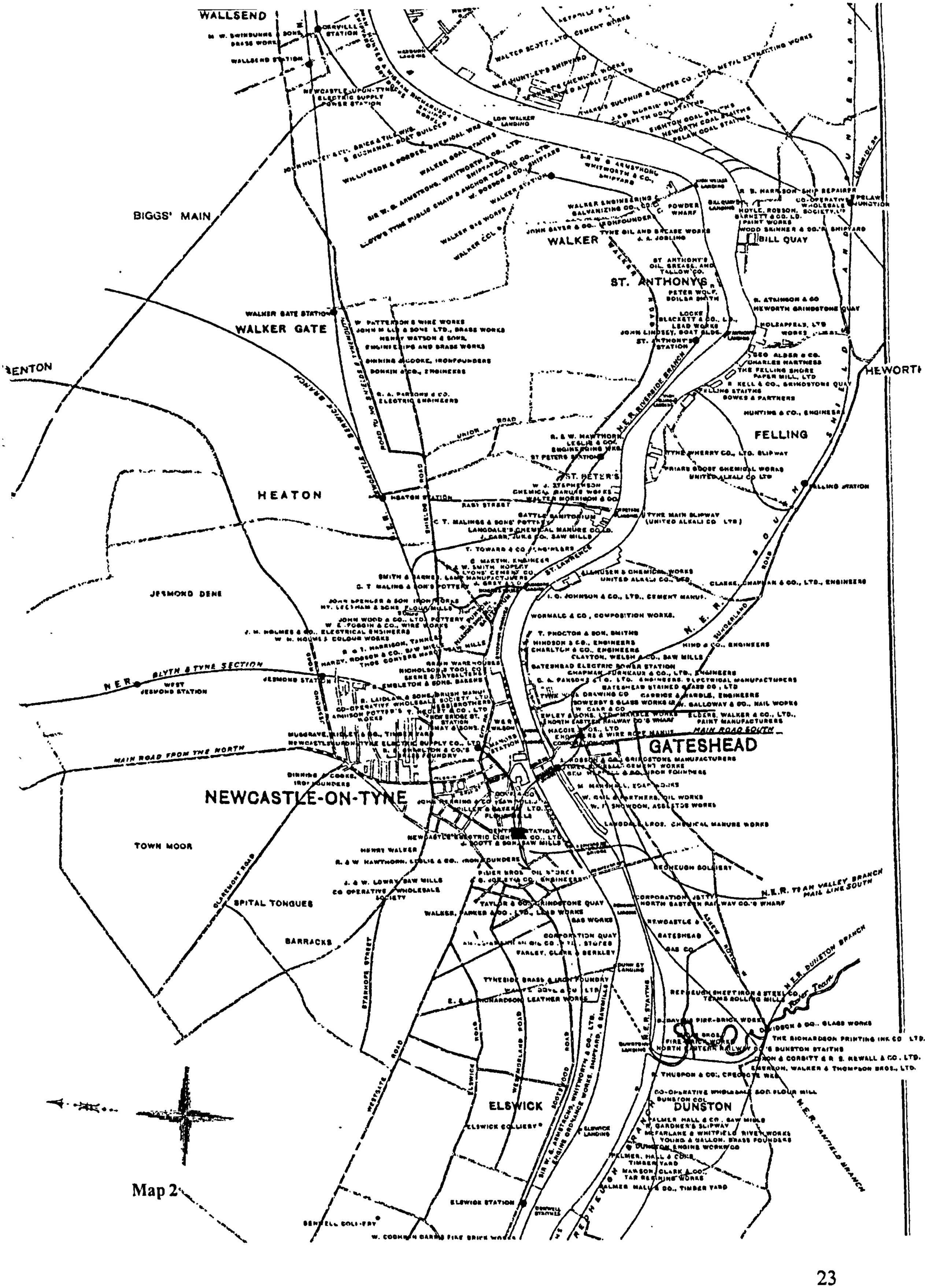
[62] See Maps 1 and 2, overleaf. Both maps are taken from Clarke, J F, *A Century of Service to Engineering and Shipbuildiing: a Centenary History of the North East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders, 1884-1984* (Newcastle: The Institution, 1984).

REID'S
NEW MAP
OF THE
RIVER TYNE
FROM
THE SEA TO NEWBURN
SHEWING ALL THE
Principal Works, Shipyards, Coal Staiths, Docks & Landing Stages.

1916.



Map 1


WALLSEND
BIGGS' MAIN
WALKER GATE
WALKER
ST. ANTHONYS
BILL QUAY
FELLING
HEWORTH
HEATON
JESMOND DENE
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE
GATESHEAD
TOWN MOOR
ELSWICK
DUNSTON
SPITAL TONGUES
BARRACKS
NEWCASTLE & RIVERSIDE BRANCH
NEWCASTLE & BENTON BRANCH
BLYTH & TYNE SECTION
MAIN ROAD FROM THE NORTH
MAIN ROAD SOUTH
UNION ROAD
SHIELDS ROAD
CLAREMONT ROAD
STARKOPE STREET
WESTGATE ROAD
ELSWICK ROAD
WEST JESMOND STATION
JESMOND STATION
HEATON STATION
WALKER GATE STATION
ST PETERS STATION
ST. ANTHONY'S STATION
WALKER STATION
NEWCASTLE CENTRAL STATION
MANORS STATION
ELSWICK STATION
FELLING STATION
HOWDON STATION
DUNSTON STATION
NEWCASTLE & GATESHEAD GAS CO
NEWCASTLE-SUNDERLAND-TYNE ELECTRIC SUPPLY CO., LTD. POWER STATION
NEWCASTLE ELECTRIC LIGHTING CO., LTD.
NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY CO.'S WHARF
NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY CO.'S DUNSTON STAITHS
N.E.R. TEAM VALLEY BRANCH MAIN LINE SOUTH
N.E.R. DUNSTON BRANCH
N.E.R. TANFIELD BRANCH
River Team
River Tyne

Map 2

War increased the profitability of these industries: Palmer's recovered from being £130,000 in debt in 1912 to registering a profit of £40,000 in 1915. However, such a turnaround served only to disguise the worsening overall situation. The war had resulted in a demand for a massive increase in capacity – an increase that would prove unsustainable in a more economically rational, peacetime, climate. The war had also served to hinder the advancement of production techniques and had disguised the faults that lay in the current processes. The need for both warships and merchant vessels resulted in a rush of construction where little energy was expended upon the development of new techniques or methods of managerial planning. Countries that were not directly involved in the war, especially Japan and Sweden, gradually became more advanced and more efficient than their British counterparts.[63] Whilst the late involvement of the USA allowed that country to invest substantial funds in its own shipyards and created technological advances that British manufacturers could not compete with. This was a factor that would prove costly to the shipbuilding industry in general and Tyneside in particular during the next twenty years.[64]

Whilst Tyneside industries had contributed mightily to the national effort during the First World War, they had succeeded only in substituting short-term gain for long-term stagnation. Plans for the post-war period were sketchy or non-existent and the attitude amongst the major employers on Tyneside seemed to consist of an assumption that the pre-war status-quo would be maintained automatically. Post-war attempts to expand into other markets were ill-planned, under-funded, and, often, financially disastrous.[65]

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[63] See Vall, N, 'Explorations in Comparative History. Economy and Society in Malmo and Newcastle since 1945', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Northumbria (2000).
[64] *Ibid.*
[65] Kaldor, M, *The Baroque Arsenal*, pp 32-33.

The inter-war years: Stagnation, Weakness, and Re-armament

At the end of the First World War the heavy industries on Tyneside faced a stern test. The war had provided an artificial boost to the munitions industry and most especially the shipbuilding and ship repairing industry, but the short term financial benefits had come at a great cost. A combination of governmental controls, increased demand, managerial inertia, and workplace discontent had led to a shortage of research and development work. This had resulted in the majority of the industrial concerns on Tyneside no longer being as competitive in the world market as they had been four years previously. The area was more dependent than ever on a small number of key, specialised, industries. These concerns were experiencing increasing pressure from abroad where competitors were modernising at a significantly faster rate.[66] Despite government recognition that the area was overly dependent on a small number of industries, and incentives to open modern branch factories, there was a lack of newer industries locating such factories on Tyneside. During the period 1932 to 1935 only one branch factory was opened in the North East Coast area, from a nation-wide total of 228.[67] This is a stark indication of the dependency of Tyneside upon the declining traditional heavy industries. Developments that attempted to introduce newer industries to the area, such as at the Team Valley Estate, often found that they could not attract a sufficient workforce. The traditional heavy industries were viewed in a positive light by the general Tyneside workers but newer, lighter,

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[66] Heim, C E, 'Industrial Organisation and Regional Development in Interwar Britain', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 43, 4 (December 1983), pp 931-952.
[67] *Ibid*, p 938.

industries were looked on unfavourably and were often forced to rely on foreign labour or young women.[68]

Despite the managerial stagnation that permeated the majority of north-east industrial concerns of the time, the directors of several of the large Tyneside companies were aware of the tests that faced them. A warning given, for example, to the shareholders of Armstrong-Whitworth at the end of the war when they were told that "We have anxious times ahead of us."[69] As a producer of guns and warships the firm realised that the demand that had made prior substantial profits possible was about to dry up. As a response to this the firm planned to diversify into new, up and coming, markets such as auto-vehicles.[70] Indeed prior to the war the company had produced small numbers of both cars and trucks at its site in Scotswood. In order to strengthen this side of their concern Armstrong-Whitworth purchased Siddeley-Deasy of Coventry a year after the end of the war but subsequent development was poorly planned and obsessed with the luxury market.[71] Hope was also placed in the prospects of the firm being able to successfully seize a sizeable portion of the locomotive industry and the Directors envisaged Scotswood becoming a major national site for the building of locomotive engines in the near future.[72]

The Tyneside firm failed in its bid to capture a substantial portion of the auto-vehicle trade but remained aware of the need for diversification. Although the company's leadership appeared to be showing the forward thinking that would be necessary to prosper in the future, a malaise common to British industry at the time

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[68] See, for example, Loebl, H, *Government Factories and the Origins of British Regional Policy 1934-1948* (Aldershot: Avesbury, 1988)
[69] Scott, J D, *Vickers. A History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963), p152.
[70] For a history of the firm up until its merger with Vickers, see Warren, K, *Armstrongs of Elswick: growth in engineering and armaments to the merger with Vickers* (London: Macmillan, 1989).
[71] Kaldor, M, *The Baroque Arsenal*, p 32.
[72] *Ibid*, p 31. Also, see Smith, K, 'From Ships to Shops', in Ayris, I, *et al*, *Water Under the Bridges. Newcastle's Twentieth Century* (Newcastle: Tyne Bridge, 1999), pp 32-33.

still persisted: outmoded forms of management. Armstrong's retained an autocratic and stifling approach to management and this weakness was exacerbated for much of the period by the appointment of Sir Gwyn West to the role of Chairman.[73] West was an opinionated, headstrong and domineering man who proved to be unwilling to take advice on issues where his knowledge was lacking; he was also uncommunicative. One historian of the firm compares his appointment to the inheritance of a medieval throne in that whilst it bestowed total power there was also a loneliness and vulnerability about the position.[74]

The collapse of an over ambitious plan to develop a large area of the Newfoundland coast had, by the early 1920s, left the company in dire financial trouble. By 1925 Armstrongs had a trade deficit of almost one million pounds and also owed over two million to the Bank of England. Uncertainty over the firm's future led to an alarming slump in the share price and the possibility of the largest employer on Tyneside entering into receivership became increasingly likely. The ramifications for the economy of Tyneside if this happened would have been disastrous, and worried speculation continued for several weeks. Concern over the situation also arose in Whitehall. The Admiralty was anxious about the effect that losing such a major industrial manufacturer would have in the event of a war and lobbied for a solution to be found urgently. It became apparent that a merger with Vickers was the only thing that would save the company. This course of action was favoured by the Bank of England. The Governor, engaged in hyperbole, describing the possibility of a deal as "desirable" in the case of Vickers, but absolutely "essential" for the sake, not only of Armstrongs, but also for the country as a whole.[75]

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[73] Both the names Armstrongs and Armstrong's are given in official reports but in the interests of standardisation the company is referred to as Armstrongs throughout this thesis.
[74] Scott, J D, *Vickers. A History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963), p 153.
[75] *Ibid*, p 165. Also Kaldor, M, *The Baroque Arsenal*, pp 32-33.

After several false starts, including the refusal by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill, to provide the sum of £1.5 million over five years, the merger finally proceeded on October 31st 1927.

Notwithstanding this (attempted) consolidation, the armaments industry on Tyneside continued to experience lean times, as the government was determined on a course of disarmament. Naval shipbuilding was badly hit and the Walker Naval Yard suffered from a lack of orders, especially for large vessels such as battleships, resulting in the yard being temporarily closed during two separate periods, 1928-1930 and November 1931-May 1934. Production of heavy guns kept the company going at Elswick; the only site in the country, apart from Barrow, where both guns and mountings could be produced. The reliance of the company on this product was such that a director was quoted, in 1932, as saying that heavy ordnance production was "still our most profitable industry."[76]

Despite a growing reputation for stagnation, some new development was undertaken at this time. The company branched out into the design and production of armoured vehicles and tanks, spearheaded by the development team of Sir John Carden and Mr V G Lloyd. This expansion was to prove an additional boon for Tyneside as work was moved from the company's Sheffield site to Elswick. This business was to prove profitable for a company which dominated this field. Orders, however, remained low; and without foreign contracts, the company no doubt would have been forced to abandon this side of its work. Overall, the profits created by the production of armoured vehicles helped the Tyneside economy when the broader economic outlook for the traditional heavy industries common to Tyneside was bleak. Orders in 1931 included not just contracts from the War Office but also from both

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[76] Ibid, p187.

India and Poland. The importance of the tank industry, to the company in particular and to Tyneside as a whole, were reflected by the comments of one of the firms directors when he stated, in 1932, that without the production of armoured vehicles the machine shops at Elswick would have been closed.

During this period the company, which was the sole British producer, had absolute control over the developing tank industry in Britain. The fact that there was little or no competition in this field was another result of the policy of disarmament. A factor which was criticised after the Second World War by official war historians when it was stated that, "The tank itself was a British invention, yet the supply and design of tanks were allowed to dwindle almost to vanishing point ... and but for the solitary and pioneering efforts of ... Vickers-Armstrongs the country would have possessed no facilities for the design and development of armoured vehicles."[77] This was another sad reflection of the apathy and torpor that dominated the majority of the political and managerial classes in Britain during this period but, again, reflects the importance role of at least one Tyneside industry in the defence of the country and, in times of war, to the national war effort. Indeed, this was an industry of worldwide importance: the sale of a tank named the *English Workman* to Russia in 1931 was to form the basis of Soviet tank design for several subsequent decades.[78]

Tyneside, and indeed the North East in general, had led the way in the formation of an efficient power transmission network, almost solely due to the innovation displayed by the Newcastle Electric Supply Company (NESCo).[79] By the 1930's the electrical grid had spread across the country and this resulted in the loss of industry from Tyneside. Most notably affected was the motor industry which

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[77] Postan, M M, *British War Production* (London: HMSO, 1952), p 188.
[78] Kaldor, M, *The Baroque Arsenal*, p 32.
[79] See Vall, N, 'The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy in Newcastle 1914-2000', in Colls, R, and Lancaster, B, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, pp 53-55.

coalesced around the Midlands area. The spread of electricity networks meant that it was more convenient for manufacturers to base themselves nearer to their primary markets, Tyneside was thus largely bypassed by the newer engineering industries.

The Tyneside economy remained dependent upon either conflict or a firm peace-time commitment to the maintenance of large and modern armed forces. Whilst only 46% of Vickers-Armstrongs turnover came from armaments during the period, the proportion was much higher for Tyneside concerns. A fall in the profitability of the Tyneside sites led to a vastly exaggerated impact on the local engineering industry: a result of the fact that 50%-75% of Tyneside general engineering labour was employed by Vickers-Armstrongs, at both Elswick and Scotswood.[80] Thus the levels of unemployment in the industry were almost entirely dependent upon the prevailing economic and political climate which can be seen by the figures for the mid 1930s. Shortly before re-armament, the unemployment figure in general engineering on Tyneside was 48%, once re-armament was in full swing, in 1937, this figure had dropped to just 8%.[81]

The industry for which the area was perhaps best known was shipbuilding. The myriad firms based on the river Tyne produced a substantial proportion of the world's shipping, both merchant and military. The industry employed a large number of Tynesiders although this employment was often sporadic in nature and unpredictable. A yard that employed 900 people one month could be employing nearly 2,000 a couple of months later; alternatively the workforce could have been cut due to a temporary lack of orders. This had a major impact on the local economy. At the turn of the century it was estimated that one in six of Tyneside men were

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[80] NA: BT 64/3260 (Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, General Characteristics of the Area, 1943).
[81] *Ibid.*

employed in the shipbuilding industry.[82] Ancillary trades, dependent on shipbuilding, were also major employers in the area. There were approximately 40,000 men employed in shipbuilding and related industries on Tyneside and, as a result, over £5,000,000 was paid into the local economy in wages over the course of the average year. As one historian commented, "Shipbuilding and ship repairing together constitute the greatest industry on Tyneside, its chief pride and the source of livelihood for a large part of its population."[83]

The slump in demand for tramp ships, as a result of the contracting coal export market, hit the area especially hard. Other countries, such as Belgium and Poland, expanded their own coal exports during this period and the resulting decline in demand for Tyneside coal, sales of British coal abroad declined by 42% between 1913 and 1938, had a knock-on impact on the production of the small steamers that had been a market staple for many of the local shipbuilders.[84] Whilst Tyneside was hit by this, the main effect was on the other rivers of the region. Tyneside had always contained a number of yards that were capable of producing warships, liners, and the larger cargo vessels, especially tankers, for which there was still a demand. The industry on the Tyne was thus more comparable to the shipyards of Clydeside than it was to the yards of other North East coast towns.

The crisis of the 1930's resulted in several factors that combined to make the situation within the industry even more serious. Lack of available funds meant that slipways and equipment could not be maintained and the subsequent deterioration of these sites led to the industry becoming less efficient and more expensive. Many skilled workers became unemployed for long periods of time and a large percentage

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[82] Dougan, D, *The History of North East Shipbuilding* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), pp 128-129.
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] Dintenfass, M, *Managing Industrial Decline. Entrepreneurship in the British Coal Industry between the Wars* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992), pp 170-173.

left the industry to seek employment in other fields. This resulted in large numbers of workers migrating from the traditional shipbuilding areas to the areas that had developed light industries. Whilst this phenomenon undoubtedly occurred on Tyneside it would seem that it was of a significantly more limited extent than, for example, Clydeside or Merseyside. However Tyneside males still accounted for 4.3% of the total migrant population of Coventry in the period 1920-1939 (there were an estimated 260 Tyneside born men residing in Coventry during the period), whilst Tyneside females represented 3.7% of the total number of female migrants (an estimated 39 women in total). This phenomenon proved a cause for concern on Tyneside as these men who could find employment in the varied and modern light industries of places, such as Coventry, were frequently the more skilled, qualified or time-served engineers, of the local workforce.[85] In addition to this, the majority of those who moved away from Tyneside were from the Newcastle area whilst the mining areas saw relatively little movement despite being more badly effected by the economic conditions.[86]

The slump in shipbuilding orders had a devastating effect on the industry as a whole, but the effect was felt hardest on Tyneside where the local population was so dependant upon shipbuilding and its ancillary industries. Whilst the industry had been in decline for some time it was the drastic slump of the early 1930s that accelerated this feature. This downward trend manifested "itself in every region, was especially marked in the principle shipbuilding regions, and, within this group, in the Northern Region and in Scotland."[87] At one point during the 1930s less than 3% of

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[85] Shenfield, A & Sargant Florence, P, 'Labour for the War Industries: The Experience of Coventry', *The Review of Economic Studies*, 12, 1 (1944-1945), pp 43-45 and 48-49.
[86] Also, see Lancaster, B, and Mason, T (eds), *Life and Labour in a 20th Century City. The Experience of Coventry* (Coventry: Cryfield Press, 1992), pp 57-80.
[87] Ross, N S, 'Employment in Shipbuilding and Ship-Repairing in Great Britain', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A*, 115, 4 (1952), p 526.

berths were in use on the river, whilst, in Jarrow, unemployment in the industry stood at 80%. The rot had started in the previous decade when launches dropped by a third year on year. By 1930 the depression of the industry was biting hard at the yards of Tyneside. The north-east yards had launched some 600,000 tons during the first year of the decade but a year later the total stood at only 68,000 tons, a fall of 88%; by 1932 the Tyneside yards launched only 24,000 tons. This was largely due to an absolute lack of orders for oil tankers, a type of vessel that had been the staple of many of the larger Tyneside yards (North East yards had previously built two thirds of all British oil tankers and one third of the world total). The lack of orders hit the shipyards of the Tyne particularly hard and, by 1931, unemployment in the industry nation-wide stood at 60% whilst on Tyneside the figure was put at over 70%. In March 1931 the Newcastle Employment Committee had reported that there were 78,452 people unemployed on Tyneside. Over 60% of those previously employed in the shipbuilding industry were registered as unemployed whilst the numbers of idle from the marine engineering field had practically trebled over the previous year. The slump in the shipbuilding industry, more than in any other single industry, was responsible for the heavy pre-war unemployment on Tyneside. In 1932 the unemployment index in this industry stood at 79% and, as late as 1938, the figure still stood at 25%.[88] This again exemplified the region's over-dependence upon a small number of key industries throughout the period and the results of a downturn in specific sectors highlighting the economic vulnerabilities of the area. The importance of shipbuilding and ship-repairing work to Tyneside can be seen by the fact that the North East Coast area (including Tyneside) contained 26% of all shipyard workers in

[88] NA: BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, General Characteristics of the Area, 1943.

Britain in 1930. This was greater than that of Clydeside, and twice the combined total of Merseyside and Barrow.

In addition to rising levels of unemployment; employers understandably, attempted to cope with the Depression by decreasing wages and by restricting working hours. Both of these policies were very unpopular with both the Unions and the workforce, leading as they did to a reduction in take home pay. Restriction of working hours also led to a greater degree of inefficiency, lessening of training schedules, and a decline in standards of plant maintenance.[89] This was especially true of the engineering sector and on Tyneside the marine engineering industries. On Tyneside the average working for an engineering fitter, in 1931, was reduced by almost three hours when compared to average workloads just three years previously.[90] Of all the types of engineering firms it was those engaged in marine work that suffered the second greatest losses of hours with only the textile industry being more badly affected. Some relief was gained by the transfer of some engineering workers to other fields but the lack of newer light engineering concerns on Tyneside continued to be a significant barrier.

Available orders were far too few to sustain the massively increased capacity that had been a feature of the industry since 1914. In order to reduce this capacity a new body was set up by the government, named the National Shipbuilders Security Limited. The board of Directors was drawn from major yards on the Clyde, Tyne, Tees, Wear and Forth as well as from Belfast and Barrow. As Chairman, the government selected Sir James Lithgow of Clydeside. He was seen as one of the most able shipbuilders in the country, though he was still as prone as any when it came to failing to note technical and managerial deficiencies within the industry. Indeed, in

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[89] Hart, R A, 'Hours and Wages in the Depression: British Engineering, 1926-1938', *Explorations in Economic History*, 38 (July 2001), p 479.
[90] *Ibid*, p 485.

1925 he had made a statement to the House of Commons Commercial Committee saying that shipbuilding was in a healthy position and was, "a strong, well-organised and virile industry, with pre-eminent technical skill."[91]

The result of the policy enacted by the NSSL was that, by March 1932, three Tyneside shipyards had been bought out and closed. The Northumberland Shipbuilding Company at Howdon, Charles Rennoldson and Company at South Shields, and Renwick and Dalgleish at Hebburn were the first to go. The next year brought a further three casualties: the Tyne Iron Shipyard at Willington Quay (in business since 1876), Palmers (which had launched its last ship, the *HMS Duchess*, on July 19th 1931) and Eltringhams, which had a capacity of 18,000 tons and was put up for sale as a going concern.

Local shipbuilders, made anxious by these wholesale cuts, began appealing for government assistance. The President of the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation, Mr A L Ayre, called on the government to place Admiralty orders, as was happening in other countries (including France, Italy, and the USA), in order to maintain "a skilful and efficient shipbuilding industry".[92] Mr Ayre reiterated the importance of the industry to the country by declaring it to have been "of first importance, not only to its [the country] essential maritime trade outlook but also to its defence."[93] Tyneside, as one of the foremost shipbuilding areas, building both naval and merchant vessels, was clearly to be regarded as a vital location for the production of materials vital to Britain's trade empire as well as its defence in times of war.

Calls for direct government subsidy increased as the situation worsened. On Tyneside, however, there was not complete backing. Dr G B Hunter, Chairman of

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[91] Barnett, C, *The Audit of War: The Illusion & Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (London: Pan, 1996), p111.
[92] Scott, J D, *Vickers. A History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963), p163.
[93] *Ibid.*

Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson, stated his opposition to subsidies, saying, "I do not advocate subsidies for British industries: I am not aware that British shipowners or shipbuilders desire them. But they do ask for fair play. Should we allow subsidized foreign products and ships into our ports?"[94] This may have been the case with large concerns such as Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson, often the Blue Riband holder for being the finest shipbuilder in the world (even though the company had only 6 orders in the year 1931-1932). Yet it is certain that some of the smaller yards on the Tyne would have welcomed such government intervention. At least one of the larger yards would certainly have been desirous of financial assistance. The closure of Palmers in 1933 was a shock to the area; but it should not have been. Despite vociferous criticism of NSSL Chairman, Sir James Lithgow, for his part in the closure the facts were that the yard had no orders, no sign of a future reversal of the downturn, and huge outstanding debt repayments that it could not keep up with. This, when combined with the lack of entrepreneurial spirit during the post-war decade, ensured that the yard was beyond salvation. Jarrow MP, Ellen Wilkinson, was quick to criticise the directors of the company for taking care of their own interests ahead of those of the workforce and the town. Her criticism would appear to have some merit when we look at the accounts of the last profitable year the company experienced. In 1929 the company turned in profits of £25,000 but over a quarter of this figure was paid out in directors fees.[95] Selfish and weak leadership in the industry was heavily criticised by the unions and by later historians.[96]

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[94] *Ibid*, p166.

[95] Dougan, D, *The History of North East Shipbuilding* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1968), p 163.

[96] For examples of this see, Lorenz, E H, 'An Evolutionary Explanation for Competitive Decline: The British Shipbuilding Industry, 1890-1970', *The Journal of Economic History*, 51, 4 (December 1991), pp 911-935. Also, Broadberry, S N and Crafts N F R, 'Britain's Productivity Gap in the 1930's: Some Neglected Factors', *The Journal of Economic History*, 52, 3 (September 1992), pp 531-558.

The year 1933 was viewed with ambivalence by those involved in the industry. It was the worst year of the crisis but also the year when there were the first signs of an improvement in the situation. During the year orders continued to be abnormally low and the Tyne yards produced only 11,000 tons during the year, caused largely by the dearth in naval contracts.[97] However, orders for merchant vessels were showing signs of a dramatic increase and confidence in the industry itself, whilst still shaky, was beginning to improve. The next year showed a marked improvement: north-east yards doubled their production compared to the previous year. Recovery on Tyneside, however, was to proceed at a slower pace than the recovery of the industry nation-wide. This was largely a result of the types of vessels that the Tyne yards produced. Orders for tramp steamers and oil tankers picked up at a slower rate than for other types of vessels. Indeed it was to be several years into the period of rearmament before the Tyne yards started to catch up with the rest of the industry. The marine engineering field also improved. Progress in this industry was somewhat quicker as it was less affected by the vagaries of the types of vessels being built.[98]

Tyneside, which includes the mouth of a navigable river, had traditionally experienced great importance as a merchant port, though this significance was now in decline. Newcastle experienced a steadily increasing export trade from the 1830s onwards and, by 1883, the city was the second most important port in the country, at least in terms of tonnage exported.[99] The area was most important in the export trade, most notably coal, whilst imports, mainly consisting of consumer goods, were significant to the economy of Newcastle. The ports of the North East coast, of which the Tyne was by far the busiest, were responsible for just over 2% of the total import

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[97] TWAS: DS/VA. Vickers-Armstrongs, board minutes, 1930-1934.
[98] TWAS: DS/HL. Hawthorn Leslie & Co Ltd, balance sheets, 1930-1945.
[99] Lendrum, O, 'An Integrated Elite', pp 28-29.

and export trade in Britain but this amounted to £30 million per annum. Once again, the entrepreneurial elite of the region played a large role in this industry with a large number of shipowners living in Newcastle and several of the coal magnates owning and running their own fleets.[100]

The relative decline of the Tyne as a commercial river can be partially explained by the events that followed on from the First World War. Once more it was the area's dependence on the carboniferous economy that was to prove the greatest weakness. The contraction of the coal export business led to a substantial fall in revenue for those areas that were reliant on the trade, not least Tyneside. Exports from the Tyne had fallen by the value of £6 million in the period from 1913 to 1936. Almost all of this shortfall being represented by the coal trade, whilst imports had remained relatively steady.[101] Exports to Scandinavia, Egypt, and London increased during the period but this was more than balanced by a substantial fall in the key markets of France, Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries.[102]

Major weaknesses were clearly present beneath the outwardly healthy surface of Tyneside's industrial strength. It would appear that the area was overly reliant on the heavy industries for which it had earned fame during the previous century. The area was especially susceptible to global conditions due to the preponderance of industries that depended upon conflict for their trade.[103] The demand for coal, the area's traditional chief export, had been in steady decline for some years with the local industry being increasingly unable to compete with cheaper rivals from both home and abroad. The situation grew more severe as the decade before the war

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[100] *Ibid*, p 29.
[101] Leak, H, 'The Carrying Trade of British Shipping', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 102, 2 (1939), p 220.
[102] NA: BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, General Characteristics of the Area, 1943.
[103] Mess, H A, 'The Social Survey of Tyneside: An English Regional Social Survey', *American Journal of Sociology*, 33, 3 (November 1927), p 426.

passed, resulting in a significant slowing of the valuable export trade. During 1935 thirteen million tons of coal was dispatched from the Tyne compared to 21 million tons just ten years previously.[104]

The continued reliance of the area on the carboniferous economy is highlighted by the performance of the area's coal mining industry during the inter-war period. Much of the coal produced in the large Northumberland coalfield was exported, either to the south of England or abroad. The collapse of this market brought about by the war resulted in the contraction of the industry. Small collieries, however, still existed on Tyneside itself, many of which supplied coal to the local market. The largest of these Tyneside concerns was at Throckley, just to the West of Newcastle. Unlike the majority of the Northumberland collieries, "Throckley sold two-thirds of its coals in Northumberland. Seventy percent of the sales went to manufacturing and other industries."[105] According with this unique reliance on the domestic market, one would have expected the company to have coped more effectively with the post-war downturn but we find that by 1938 the amount of coal produced was only 71% of the pre-First World War figure. This is compared to the neighbouring Ashington colliery where production had increased by 37%.[106] Ashington was an exception to the general decline, this was largely due to an inspired and efficient managerial structure. This surprising decline was the result of poor inward investment, worsening industrial relations, and technological obsolescence.

Before the policy of re-armament in the mid to late 1930s the economic viability of the traditional heavy Tyneside industries was worsened by several additional factors. Increasing wage demands caused increasing overheads and was a

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[104] Vall, N, 'The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy in Newcastle 1914-2000' in Colls, R & Lancaster, B (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2001) pp 47-48.
[105] Dintenfass, M, *Managing Industrial Decline*, p 38.
[106] *Ibid*, p 82.

factor in the growing inability to compete demonstrated by Tyneside industries during the period. Managerial lethargy and a failure to appreciate the need for new development resulted in a lack of investment in research and in new technologies. This stagnation was a further factor that reduced the competitiveness of the area's heavy industries. Many working practices remained unchanged since the Victorian era and the complicated system of individual craftsmen's unions led to a large number of demarcation disputed that further disrupted productivity and eroded the relationship between workers, union, and management. It was a lack of vision on the part of the unions, combined with the aforementioned managerial lethargy, which had resisted the numerous attempts to modernise working practices.[107] The dilution of the workforce with semi-skilled workers, male or female,[108] during the war, had served to increase both resentment and the determination of skilled workers to defend their exalted position. To meet this end the unions resisted any attempt to curb their power, especially within the shipbuilding industry.

The period of relative peace, combined with government reluctance to spend money on military equipment, had hit the traditional industries of Tyneside during the inter-war period. The prevailing mood of lax self-satisfaction had meant that much expertise had been lost and that much needed improvements to the foundations of British heavy industry had been neglected. Thus, when the need for re-armament became urgent, many of the companies involved on Tyneside suffered from insufficient labour, a lack of facilities and the attitudes of management. Much of the equipment and techniques being used in the shipbuilding industry had not changed for 30 years or more. The entrepreneurial flair that had made Tyneside an industrial force

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[107] Lovell, J, 'Employers and Craft Unionism: A Programme of Action for British Shipbuilding, 1902-5', *Business History,* Vol. 34, 4 (October 1992), pp 3-7.
[108] Abbott, E, 'The War and Women's Work in England', *The Journal of Political Economy* Vol. 25, 7 (July 1917), pp 641-678.

had ebbed and been replaced with the complacency and worsening industrial relations between management and workforce, typified by example of Throckley.[109] Tyneside was not alone in experiencing this malaise but the effects were magnified in this area by the importance of heavy industry, whilst other areas could point to the growth of light engineering and other modern manufacturing industry Tyneside had no such positive model.

Despite the general sense of gloom in the manufacturing sector, Tyneside did have some industries that were in a process of expansion, or were at least coping with the economic conditions, during the decade before the war. These were largely in the service sector industries and, on Tyneside, were largely confined to Newcastle upon Tyne and the coastal resorts of Tynemouth and Whitley Bay. Newcastle upon Tyne had always been the most prosperous area of Tyneside and, as the regional centre, had always enjoyed economic development separate from the rest of the region due to its importance as the centre for regional government and trade. In the words of Oliver Lendrum "It is easy to assume that Newcastle's economic development followed the same path as that of Tyneside generally during the years 1840-1914",[110] this continued after the First World War. It was the main distribution point for the North East of England. The initial development of this retail sector took place between 1841 and 1911. Retail, too, was dominated by a small number of entrepreneurs. The first was Emerson Bainbridge who opened a drapery store in 1838 and managed to bring his products to the substantial numbers of lower-middle-class residents of the city. He was followed, in 1882, by J J Fenwick who demonstrated a sound head for marketing by utilising window displays and press advertising to publicise his store. Once again, these entrepreneurs were an integrated part of the elite of the city:

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[109] Dintenfass, M, *Managing Industrial Decline*, p 114-121.
[110] Lendrum, O, 'An Integrated Elite', p 27.

Bainbridge had sat on the boards of several major industrial firms, including both Wallsend Slipway Company and Swan Hunter.[111] These concerns employed large numbers of workers, Fenwick's alone employed 400 at the start of the First World War,[112] and are rarely mentioned in studies of the area, although the official survey into Tyneside did mention the numbers involved in this sector. The food, drink and tobacco production industry combined with catering, clothing, and the various distributive trades employed some 77,500 people on Tyneside in July 1939, of whom 55.5% were female. The various distributive trades alone employed some 51,400 persons and were the greatest single employer amongst the listed categories, being larger than the engineering industry total by some 3,800 workers.[113]

After the dominance of the pacifist belief in armaments cuts the government was finally persuaded by the developing world situation that it could no longer palliate the cutting of funds to the armed forces. The abnegation of previous policy resulted in a wide-ranging plan for the upgrading of the armed forces and a programme of modern re-armament was prepared and launched in 1934. Several forward thinking company directors had correctly anticipated this development and had begun putting in place schemes to capitalise on a prospective boom period. One such company was Vickers-Armstrongs. In the years leading up to the re-armament period the company had been independently developing several new weapons systems, including revolutionary anti-aircraft guns. The stated aim of the board during this period was to develop every weapon that a newly modernised British Army would require. This intention had sprung from a realisation of the level of foreign competition and was very much a locally-based initiative that received little or no official backing from central government. This can be seen by a report from a

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[111] *Ibid*, pp 37-39.
[112] *Ibid.*
[113] NA: BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, Pre-War Position, 1943.

member of the board which stated "We shall never be on equal terms with either Schneider, Bofors or Skoda in the competition for land armaments until we have a complete range of models, and I consider the time has now arrived to take further steps towards completing this range."[114]

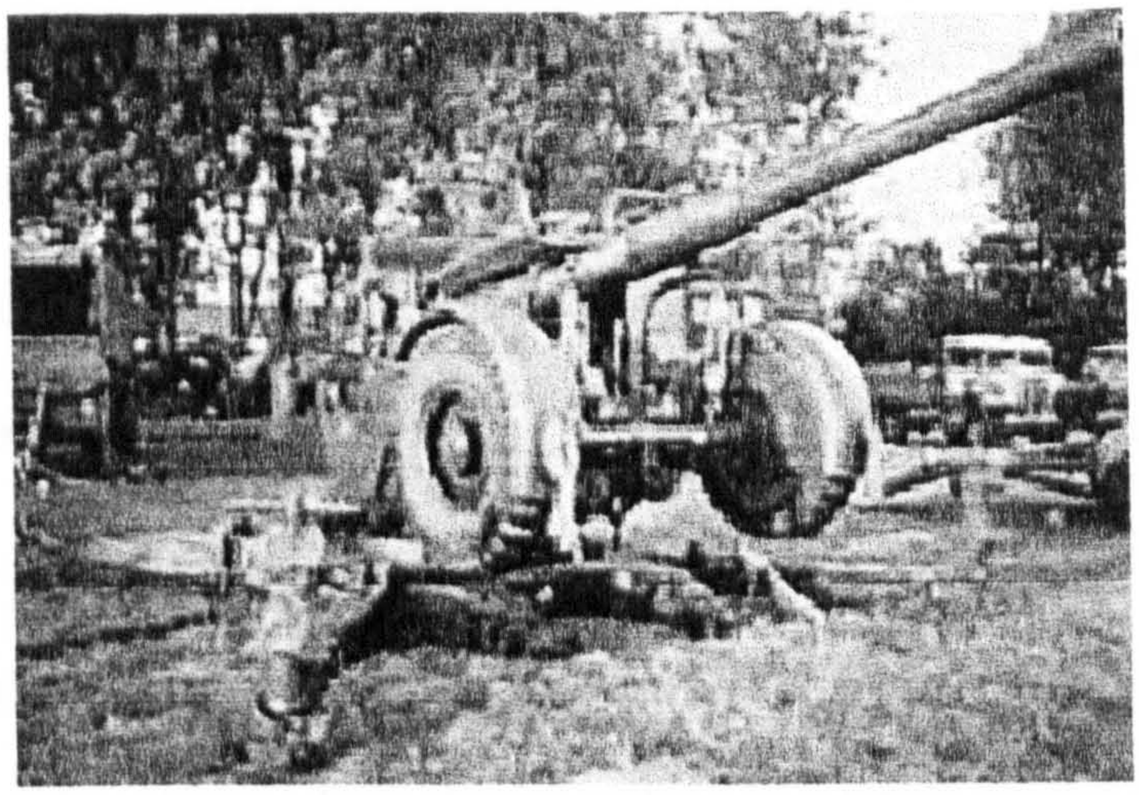

Figure 1. A 3.7" (90mm) AA Gun produced by Vickers-Armstrongs in the mid-1930's.[115]

Unfortunately, despite the government policy, there was still a residual lack of commitment to the process of re-armament. This was largely a result of opposition from a number of civil servants and politicians who were confident that there would be a further prolonged period of peace, or that the policy of appeasing Germany would yet prove successful. The Labour Party was also strongly anti-rearmament throughout this period. A lingering lack of commitment can be seen in the government attitude towards Vickers-Armstrongs' new anti-aircraft weaponry. Despite substantial orders from overseas governments and faced with armed forces enthusiasm for the weapon, arising from its superiority over the weapons then in use, the British War Office remained lukewarm in its attitude towards the new weapons.[116]

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[114] Scott, J D, *Vickers*, p 235.
[115] Photograph © of the Military Vehicle Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2004.
[116] Scott, J D, *Vickers*, p 235.

Much of the activity at Vickers-Armstrongs gave a false impression of a busy and prosperous production. The majority of the work, however, was not immediately profitable and there was a greater degree of development work in progress than there was production. At Elswick, the Gun Department remained at less than half capacity at the start of the re-armament period and the majority of its production was naval. The next year was only a little better. Indeed, the only War Office contract obtained by the Elswick site in that year was for a pair of 3.7-inch guns.[117]

Over the next couple of years orders improved drastically and, by 1937, the Gun Department was operating at full capacity. This healthy situation was to continue throughout the remaining years of re-armament, although foreign orders continued to play an important role as late as 1939.[118] Although this foreign work brought in much needed capital it also meant a reduction in the amount of capacity for production of British orders. There were however local benefits to the foreign orders as they enabled firms such as Vickers-Armstrongs to maintain a pool of skilled workers and to train new apprentices, something which was to prove problematic in the naval side of the firms' business.

Throughout the re-armament period orders did improve, but, Vickers-Armstrongs remained largely what it had always primarily been, a supplier of naval armaments. The only maximum effort that was required of the firm was in the production of the Valentine tank, built largely at the firm's Scotswood site, and this occurred only in the year immediately prior to the war. As Scott commented in his official history of the firm, "In preparing for the Second World War, Vickers-Armstrongs had remained, to a surprising extent, what Vickers-Armstrongs had been when preparing for the First [World War], preponderantly suppliers of naval

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[117] *Ibid.*
[118] *Ibid*, 236.

armaments."[119] As one of the major employers on Tyneside this represents a huge over-dependency on a specialised form of work, one which depended on several economic and political factors. However, the extent of the upturn in the fortunes of the firm can be seen by the fact that the numbers of insured workers in general engineering on Tyneside rose by 25% over the period, many of them working at Vickers-Armstrongs factories and yards.[120]

The period of re-armament led to an upturn in the naval work of Vickers-Armstrongs. The rapid recovery was adumbrated by the recognition during the 1930s that the "Royal Navy [was] dangerously short of modern ships" and that there were few remaining yards capable of building such large naval vessels.[121] 1934 saw the re-opening of the Naval Yard at Walker and the laying down of the keel of the cruiser *HMS Newcastle*.[122] Additional orders were forthcoming but overall the growth of business continued at a relatively slow rate. By 1936 the restrictive requirements of the Washington and London naval treaties had been revoked and the government ordered a large-scale programme of naval rebuilding. The backbone of this rebuilding programme laid out in a defence white paper was the five battleships of the King George V class supported by five additional cruisers and, "an unspecified number of destroyers and submarines in a steady replacement programme." The first of these ships, *HMS King George V*, was built at the Naval Yard. The new building programme meant there was a concomitant requirement for gun mountings. As the Tyneside site was one of the few in the country that was capable of producing heavy gun mountings capacity was quickly taken up, a crisis that was to continue throughout the war. As a response to this increase in orders the firm began an investment

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[119] *Ibid*, p 237.
[120] NA: BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, General Characteristics of the Area, 1943.
[121] Barnett, C, *The Audit of War. The Illusion & Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (London: Pan, 1996), p 112.
[122] Scott, J D, *Vickers*, p 221.

programme, sinking £2 million into developing greater capacity, £250,000 was invested in order to improve the Elswick facility. This campaign of investment and expansion was made possible solely by the upturn in orders as a result of naval re-armament.[123]

The Vickers-Armstrongs yards were busier during this period than any of their chief competitors with orders for one battleship, two aircraft carriers, two cruisers, four destroyers and six submarines in 1937. This rapid increase in orders was not without difficulties. Whilst Tyneside was not as badly affected as many other areas by the lack of skilled labour there was an alternative problem in that, owing to professional pride, many of these men wanted to work on the longer term and more prestigious heavier ships. It proved quite problematic to encourage them to work on the smaller, but vital, destroyers and corvettes. This was compounded by the favour that was shown by the yards towards large-scale building contracts as opposed to the smaller escort vessels. The major armaments producers of Tyneside, in common with others, had a scale of preference when it came to orders. All preferred large naval units as opposed to new infantry weapons or even armoured vehicles.[124]

The manpower shortages that existed throughout the armaments industry was most acute in relation to work on gun mountings. At the start of 1938 Craven (the managing director of Vickers-Armstrongs) wrote to Sir Thomas Inskip complaining that, "Quite frankly, the position is that Vickers-Armstrongs are getting behind-hand in most of their armament products and I believe that the only real reason for this, where plant had already been installed, is because of the difficulty of manpower."[125] This was the official line but there were also other reasons for the late completion of orders; foremost amongst them was a lack of central control and guidance combined

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[123] *Ibid*, pp 221-222.
[124] Kaldor, M, *The Baroque Arsenal*, p 26.
[125] Scott, J D, *Vickers*, p 225.

with unrealistic goals. As these items could only be produced at Elswick and Barrow it was inevitable that a bottleneck would develop when orders increased as radically as they did in the late 1930's. Several times the company complained that, "Both the Admiralty and the War Office are asking for earlier dates than it is possible to achieve. A programme of priority would be of great advantage to us."[126] Once again the weaknesses caused by the previous depression were overshadowing the armaments industry on which so many Tynesider's depended.

Major naval work continued to be the most profitable area for the company and by 1939 many Tyneside shipyard workers were again employed at full capacity in building new naval vessels. By 1939 the Naval Yard alone was involved in building the aircraft carrier, *HMS Victorious*, as well as the 8,000 ton cruiser, *HMS Nigeria*. Alongside these vessels berths were prepared for the construction of the battleship, *HMS Lion*, and two escort vessels. The economic and political conditions once again were favourable for the heavy industries that dominated Tyneside. The encroachment of war led to a boom for the armaments and shipbuilding industries and subsequently meant that the faults of the previous decade were papered over and forgotten in the crisis of immediate re-armament. The faults, however, were still present: facilities were still obsolete when compared to many foreign competitors, relations between employers and employees were still problematic, and techniques were still archaic. Moreover, Tyneside was still heavily dependent on several specialised industries and there was the same lack of diversification that had blighted the depression years. Indeed, if anything, the re-armament period had served to magnify the polarisation of the area's heavy industries.

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[126] *Ibid.*

For the more general shipbuilders of the Tyne the re-armaments programme also led to an increase in orders but at a substantially slower rate than that experienced by Vickers-Armstrongs. Many of the smaller yards were dependent upon the merchant trade and so the increase in building of naval vessels would have little or no effect on their businesses. In 1934, the year that Palmers was finally sold to the NSSL, the capacity of British shipyards had been successfully reduced by some one million tons, even though the remaining yards still had capacity for over three times the available work. The number of shipbuilding employees nationally had dropped from 358,000 in 1923 to 157,000 by 1935 whilst on Tyneside the number of insured workers in the industry fell by 20% over the years 1929 to 1938.[127] The industry still suffered from 40% unemployment in some areas although regional factors played a large part in these figures.

By 1935 it was clear that the government was required to intervene in the industry. It did so by introducing the British Shipping (Assistance) Act. This enabled the Treasury to advance a total sum of up to £10 million in loans that were repayable in 12 years at an interest rate of 3%. There were conditions on these loans that meant the recipient firms would have to scrap two tons for every one ton of construction. Most of the ships to be built at this time were general cargo vessels of the types that many Tyneside yards specialised in so that, in theory, the hard-hit yards of Tyneside should have seen the greatest benefit. Unfortunately, the act fell short of expectations. The rate of orders was still too slow and the act failed to abate the crippling effects of foreign, subsidised, competition. The industry did not recover completely until 1939 when then introduction of a system of low interest loans led to a rash of orders

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[127] NA: BT 64/3260 Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, General Characteristics of the Area, 1943.

totalling over 700,000 tons, which, when combined with naval building programmes, led to the biggest boom in a decade.

Despite the many problems, the general trend in the industry at the time was upwards. By 1936, orders for merchant ships had gone up by almost five times the figure for 1932-1933 and, in the words of Sir Maurice Denny, the President of the Employers' Federation, "At long last, the dark clouds have rolled away."[128] Whilst the general sentiment of Sir Maurice was correct, on Tyneside the situation was still poor when compared to the years before the depression of the 1930s. North East shipyards had been responsible for a third of world output before 1930 but, by 1936, this total had fallen to just 12%. Figures for cargo ships built in Britain at the time intimate a continuing importance of the area to global shipbuilding. It was estimated by *The Economist* in 1939 that, "of a total of 507,000 gross tons, 464,000, or 92 per cent of the total, were being built in Scotland and on the North East Coast."[129] In addition to the increasing orders the companies were also benefiting from the increasing value of these contracts. During the six year period to 1937 the cost of a 7,000 ton merchant vessel increased by approximately 60%.[130]

The diverse nature of Tyneside shipbuilding, including merchant, naval, and repair work, meant that several of the larger yards were able to exploit the naval re-armament scheme. By September 1936 there were seventeen warships under construction in the yards of Tyneside. The majority of the larger, fleet, units were contracted to the Naval Yard but independent shipbuilders also capitalised. Swan's had procured contracts for a cruiser and four destroyers, including *HMS Hunter*, whilst Hawthorn Leslie was constructing the Sheffield Class cruiser, *HMS*

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[128] Dougan, D, *The History of North East Shipbuilding* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1968), p 170.
[129] Ross, N S, 'Employment in Shipbuilding and Ship-Repairing in Great Britain', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A*, 115, 4 (1952), p 528.
[130] *Ibid.*

Manchester, and two destroyers. In the following March Swan's received an order for a 35,000 ton battleship, *HMS Jellicoe*, but this was later cancelled due to the more pressing demand for escort vessels rather than large capital ships.[131]

By 1937 the Tyneside yards were operating at full capacity and the problems of manpower caused by the previous years of neglect began to manifest themselves. Labour shortages were a constant problem as many of the skilled workers who had found themselves redundant during the early 1930s had left the area or were now working in other industries. The pressure continued to mount on the shipyards of the Tyne and when the Naval Yard launched the *HMS King George V* on February 21st 1939 an order for another battleship followed a day later. This was in addition to the aircraft carrier, five cruisers and eight destroyers that were in various stages of construction on the river at this time. Once again the oncoming war had created an artificial boom for one of the industries on which Tyneside was dependent and little thought was given to the situation that would affect the industry after the war had ended. Whilst the depression clearly demonstrated that over-specialisation in the traditional heavy industries had caused the regional economy to become vulnerable to the fickle movements of global events, the re-armament period showed that "The North East had returned in full measure to its traditional role of making weapons of destruction with all the skill and energy at its command. In doing so, it underlined yet again the old axiom that it is busiest and most prosperous in times of war."[132] Unfortunately there was a resulting lack of planning for a continuation of success in peacetime or an analysis of the problems that would have to be faced.

For all his reputation on the world-wide market the Tyneside industrial worker remained, in the approach to war, an exponent of obsolete techniques. He lacked

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[131] Dougan, D, *The History of North East Shipbuilding*, pp 187-195.
[132] *Ibid*, p 175.

many of the skills necessary for the increasingly technologically-reliant market. For example, at the turn of the century Armstrong-Whitworth employed almost 20,000 men, 2.5% of the total population of Tyneside, in armaments production, yet production techniques had changed little in the last two decades. Unfortunately these industries were in decline by the 1930s, especially when compared to the rising prosperity of the newer industries that were becoming a characteristic of the south of the country. It has been estimated that the new industries saw a rise in the number of people they employed of almost three million people whilst the traditional heavy industries had lost over 700,000 employees between 1923 and 1937.[133] In order to prosper the workers in the region would be required to face these challenges and develop newer skills for use in the developing industries. There were, however, no organised structures to facilitate the change in the skills base that would be required if Tyneside was to take advantage of the changing industrial situation. This was recognised by some in local government and a plan of action was prepared. A meeting of Newcastle City and County Council on 20th April 1938 was of the opinion that, "given that it was necessary to look beyond to future opportunities: 'They had lost the motor trade, but now there was the manufacture of aircraft, and they should be looking after that.'"[134]

It would appear that the opportunity to develop these newer industries was being denied to the people of Tyneside by the very government that should have been giving encouragement. Just prior to the war Swan Hunter's, in conjunction with Anthony Fokker and D.W. Douglas of the United States of America proposed the creation of a modern aircraft factory on Tyneside. The innovative plan to develop this

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[133] Heim, C E, 'Structural Transormation and the Demand for New Labour in Advanced Economies: Interwar Britain', *The Journal of Economic History*, 44, 2 (June 1984), pp 588-589.
[134] Heim, C E, 'Industrial Organisation and Regional Development in Interwar Britain', *The Journal of Economic History*, 43, 4 (December 1983), p 945.

extensive factory and testing field, to be called British Fokker Douglas Aircraft Ltd, was rejected out of hand by the Secretary of State for Air. It was felt that the area was too vulnerable to aerial attack.[135] Despite this fear, much of the British aircraft industry developed around Coventry and other areas that were as easily identified from the air as Tyneside and were nearer to Luftwaffe bases with the result that many of these areas suffered significantly heavier bombing. Short-sighted decisions such as this served to stifle the skills base of the workers in the region and were to prove costly after the initial post-war reconstruction period.

Second World War, Industrial Tyneside

Official wartime reports defined Tyneside as "a compact industrial community of over 800,000 persons."[136] This figure fluctuated a great deal and, during the war, it was considerably higher. The area included thirteen towns extending along the River Tyne for some sixteen miles from the mouth of the river and including the towns of Whitley Bay and Monkseaton on the coast to the north of Tynemouth. Out of the total population 37.5% lived in the metropolitan city of Newcastle upon Tyne whilst only six percent lived in the residential towns of Gosforth, Whitley Bay, and Monkseaton. The bulk of the remaining 66.5% of the population lived in the remaining ten towns and consisted of "almost exclusively working-class folk engaged in a small number of large heavy industries."[137] Board of Trade officials concluded that the area could be seen as one whole unit industrially, commercially, and to a large

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[135] Vall, N, 'The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy in Newcastle 1914-2000' in Colls, R & Lancaster, B (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2001) pp 57-58.
[136] NA: BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: report on Tyneside, general characteristics of the area, 1943.
[137] *Ibid.*

extent socially, and cautioned that the populations of the various areas of Tyneside often had strong regional identities.

As the Board of Trade had identified, the Tyneside workforce was hugely reliant upon a select few key industries, almost all of them within the heavy engineering field. Engineering industries, during 1939, accounted for 27.4% of the total number of insured workers in Newcastle County Borough. A total of 36,220 people were employed in these trades throughout Newcastle (other areas of Tyneside had even higher proportions working in these industries). When we add the number that were involved in the coal mining and chemical industries this number increases to 41,995, or 31.7% of the total number of insured workers.[138]

Other major industrial employers on Tyneside included representatives of the food, drink, and tobacco trades. Between them these industries employed more than 30,000 people by 1939.[139] On Tyneside, brewing was traditionally an important employer. The building and catering trades were also large-scale employers in the region although much of the employment they provided was seasonal. The vast majority of the catering trade was centred on the chief holiday resorts of the area: Whitley Bay, Cullercoats, and Monkseaton being the foremost. Despite this, the area remained one which was overly dependent upon the traditional heavy industries of the carboniferous economy.

The geographical location of Tyneside with its large port and proximity to the sea led to an extensive export industry. As a major port Tyneside was responsible for a majority of the export business on the north-east coast of England as well as the vast majority of imports into the area. The main exports consisted of coal and engineering products with dairy produce and grain being imported through Tyneside. The reasons

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[138] *Ibid*, report on Region I (Northern), Newcastle upon Tyne County Borough, 1943.
[139] NA: BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: report on Tyneside, general characteristics of the area, 1943.

for Tyneside being a major import centre was that Newcastle as the regional capital had the majority of the area's distributive trades and service sector industries. Indeed, by 1939 more than 51,000 persons were employed in the transport and distributive trades on Tyneside. The port also served a subsidiary purpose as a base for a substantial deep-sea fishing fleet, based mainly at North Shields.[140] This provided work for a large number of local men, both crewing the boats and in onshore support work. Though this industry was important only in a very confined geographical area it was, nevertheless, severely curtailed by the war as many of the crewmen were members of the Royal Naval Reserve and were immediately called up to active service, whilst many boats were requisitioned for admiralty use, usually as patrol vessels or minesweepers.

The war came at a time of crisis for traditional, heavy, Tyneside industrial concerns. Whilst there had been a recovery in the later part of the decade the levels of production and employment had not reached the proportions of the years immediately following the First World War. With the necessity of increased production in steel, coal, shipbuilding and in armaments production the war brought an artificial boom time to the Tyneside economy. Artificial, in the sense that this expansion was at odds with the preceding economic situation and by the artificially high levels of demand for industrial products due to the removal of various import markets combined with the higher demand at home replacing lost exports. The numbers employed within the fields of engineering and metal working on Tyneside increased by more than 20,000 persons during the first two years of the war.[141] Vickers Armstrongs were responsible for the majority of these extra jobs but other firms such as Reyrolles, Parsons and a number of small firms on the newly established Team Valley Industrial Estate also

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[140] TWAS: EX/NS. Register of fishing boats, 1937-1946.
[141] NA: BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, Effect of the War, 1943.

substantially increased their workforce, a large percentage of the Team Valley workers being women.[142] Expansion of engineering concerns on the borders of Tyneside, not least at the Royal Ordnance factory at Birtley, also led to increased work for the people of the area.

Awareness of the artificiality of the situation was widespread and generally acknowledged both at a local and national level. Despite this, many of the leading local industrialists were, regrettably, guided by false and unrealistic optimism. A governmental report on Tyneside industry stated that "The engineering industry is dominated by Vickers Armstrong which has more than doubled its labour force during the war. The other large engineering firm is C. A. Parsons which has also considerably increased its war-time output...In view of the enormous expansion in the labour force during the war...we must, however, expect some drop after the war."[143] The report then goes on to acknowledge the bleak prospects for much of the Tyneside industry at the end of the war in the very first sentence of its summing up of the prospects of post-war Tyneside. "It would seem inevitable that after reconstruction demands have been met, a heavy slump will occur in the engineering and shipbuilding industries which have suffered abnormal expansion."[144]

A minority of industrialists counselled caution. They warned that the boom was unsustainable and would end abruptly when the conflict was resolved. Their admonishments were unheeded by the much greater majority of people within the senior management level who were content to maintain a determined but unfocussed optimism because of the large profits that were being made at the start of the war. Tyneside benefited a great deal from war work and North East shipyards were

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[142] *Ibid*, also, see Loebl, H, *Government Factories*.
[143] NA: BT 64/3260. Written report for Mr B C Engholm, Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, 22nd September 1944.
[144] NA : BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, Post-War Prospects, 1943.

responsible for the replacement of over half of the 4 million tons of shipping lost by Britain during the war. Tyneside was responsible for only 535,800 tons of this merchant shipping but the Tyneside yards were predominantly working on naval contracts throughout the war. This can by seen by the preponderance of naval contracts, mainly for destroyers, contained within the reports from firms such as the Wallsend Slipway and Engineering Company, a subsidiary of Swan's. This yard was described as working "solely on Admiralty contracts".[145] During the course of the Second World War the Tyne yards launched 74 merchant ships whilst Swan's alone launched a total of 83 warships, totalling more than 250,000 tons.

Employment in the Tyneside shipyards increased rapidly but never quite attained the levels of employment during the previous war. By 1940 Hawthorn Leslie had increased its workforce by over 2,000 men to a total of 6,600. Due to the massively increased demand for tonnage, of merchant and naval shipping, there were calls for several of the yards that had been casualties of the Depression but not dismantled to be re-opened. On Tyneside there were demands for the re-opening of Northumberland Shipbuilding Company at Howdon and the Tyne Iron Shipbuilding Company at neighbouring Willington Quay. High level deputations from both of these areas presented their cases to the Admiralty and continued to press their points throughout the war. This resulted in competition and rivalry between the two respective councils and eventually an Admiralty enquiry into the alleged misuse of labour in the Tyneside shipyards.[146] Both of these yards remained closed but the old Low Walker Yard of Armstrong-Mitchell was successfully re-opened. The problem that the Admiralty stated was not one of capacity, of which there was an ample amount, but a lack of available skilled labour. This opinion was in turn disputed by

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[145] TWAS: DS/SWH/1/7. Minutes from Board meeting, July 10th 1941, p 20.
[146] NA: ADM 1/15260. Correspondence between County Borough of Tynemouth, Borough of Jarrow and the Admiralty, May – June 1943.

the Ministry of Labour, in a bad tempered exchange of memos, which claimed that the unskilled labour for the re-opening of the shipyards as yards building smaller vessels or assembling pre-fabricated ships could indeed be found in the local area.[147] However, reports from the board of Swan Hunters would seem to reinforce the Admiralty's case by stating that work at Wallsend Slipway was being delayed due to a, "lack of men."[148] It would also seem that the Repair Department was forced to hire as many men as possible due to the increased amount of available work.[149] The Repair Department was described during the period as working "to the fullest capacity and efforts being made to increase production still further."[150]

Some problems remained in the field of shipbuilding: largely a result of the unnatural boom that the war created. Foremost amongst the problems was the simple fact that the almost constant demand did not lend itself to the upkeep of delicate or old equipment nor did it aid in the replacement of obsolescent items of machinery. This was the greatest problem faced by shipbuilders as they attempted to cope with wartime production demands. Tyneside yards, in common with the industry in general, had "entered the Second World War ... with a shipbuilding industry that was a rusting, partially dismantled and partly unmanned hulk of essentially Victorian technology, and, on the whole, no less rusting were its management and workforce and their operational methods."[151] A technological survey of all yards in 1942 by the Controller of Machine Tools described how "the technical history of the industry since the 1870s had bequeathed yards and layouts unsuitable to modern methods".[152]

Cecil Bentham, the head of the survey team, reported that the cranes that were in use

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[147] *Ibid*, memo from Mr E A Hitchman, Ministry of Labour, to Mr J G Lang, Admiralty, June 11th 1943.
[148] TWAS: DS/SWH/1/7. Minutes from Board meeting, September 2nd 1941, Report on Wallsend Slipway, p 28.
[149] *Ibid*, minutes from Board meeting, September 2nd 1941, p 27.
[150] *Ibid*, Swan Hunters & Wigham Richardson, minutes from board meeting, May 6th 1941, p 16.
[151] Barnett, C, *The Audit of War*, p 112.
[152] *Ibid*, p 116.

in the majority of yards were outdated and inadequate, whilst the majority of machine tools exceeded 20 years in age. The field of marine engineering fared little better with Bentham stating that "only 25 per cent of the plant in the North-east was modern".[153]

This harsh criticism of the state of British shipbuilding led to changes. The Shipyard Development Committee funded an ambitious spending programme designed to rehabilitate the shipyards. From 1942-1944, at a cost of £6 million, new machinery, cranes, and tools were purchased and fitted in many yards. This was indeed "a remarkable feat of re-equipment in the middle of a world war."[154]

Although the Tyneside yards did continue to spend substantial amounts of money on renewing items of vital equipment whenever possible it would seem that the greatest obstruction was finding time to fit the equipment. The increased demand led to several yards attempting to open up new facilities, including new dry-docks, berths and, in the case of Swan Hunters' Neptune Yard, new plating sheds costing over £2,000.[155] These expenditures of course came at a time of increased profitability, for example, Wallsend Slipway made profits of £143,504 during 1944. This total was an increase of almost £100,000 on the previous year but, as recently as 1941, the company had been forced to sell off £100,000 in investments due solely to delays in receiving payment for completed contracts. These debts were outstanding not only on government contracts but on overseas private contracts such as the work performed for the Canadian Sarmia Steamships Ltd who owed over £175,000 to the company in 1941.[156]

Due to the importance of the industry during wartime the workers were imbued with greater power. Amongst the ways in which this power was experienced

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[153] *Ibid*, pp 116-117.
[154] *Ibid*, p 119.
[155] TWAS: DS/SWH/1/7. Swan Hunters & Wigham Richardson, minutes from board meeting, July 10th 1941, p 20.
[156] *Ibid*, May 6th 1941, pp 14-18.

was in the demand for better working conditions, despite the pressures of war. As workers were expected to endure longer hours it became a prime concern that they should have greater access to canteen and rest facilities at their places of work. Despite opposition the majority of shipbuilding firms on Tyneside were coerced by the government, which was afraid of unnecessary and crippling strikes, into accepting the demands of the workforce. At Swan's, for example, the company was forced, after complaints from the workforce and advice from the local Factories Inspector, to spend at least £15,000 on a new 600 capacity canteen at Wallsend Slipway.[157]

The war also brought changes to the products being constructed by the Tyneside engineering firms. As the war progressed it became obvious that there would be more demand for smaller naval vessels than there would be for the huge battleships of previous years. The result of this was the cancellation of the Lion Class battleships that had been ordered and their replacement with a greater number of orders for escort vessels and auxiliary shipping. The U-boat war created a demand for a large number of escorts and the Admiralty estimated in 1940 that the Royal Navy would require at least 100 more of this type of vessel. Whilst the Naval Yard was more experienced in the construction of larger ships the records of Vickers-Armstrongs show that the company did adapt to the building of the smaller ships once it became clear that there was little demand for larger vessels. The company was to remain fully employed due to the fact that the guns and mountings for all shipping had to be produced by the company, at either Barrow or Elswick. This can be seen in the variety of products that Elswick worked on during the war. These ranged from the 16-inch mountings for the Lion Class battleships through to the 5.25-inch mountings that represented the secondary armament on the King George V Class ships. Orders

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[157] *Ibid*, report to the board, July 1941, p 19.

for Tyneside gun mountings during the period totalled £30 million. The Naval Yard had orders for £13 million of naval work; Elswick had over £12 million and Scotswood £5 million. This was from a total amount of work worth £44 million. These figures highlight the Tyneside firm's dependency upon naval work – a proportion running at 68% in 1940.

One of the greatest problems faced by heavy industry on Tyneside was the securing of adequate coal supplies. Despite the existence of the extensive Northumberland and Durham coalfields, and a number of smaller Tyneside collieries, much of the production was exported by sea to the south of the country. In the first months of the war a dearth of coastal shipping forced a crisis and led to the temporary closure of several Northumberland and Durham pits.[158] The wartime demands placed upon the coal production trade, at a time when output had been steadily declining for several years, stretched an already overextended industry and were a factor in the heightening tensions between the workforce and the management.[159]

The heavy industries of Tyneside, as elsewhere, depended, either directly or indirectly, upon coal for their continued production needs. Unfortunately the productivity of both the individual collieries and the workers themselves continued to drop steadily throughout the period. This was the result of a number of factors including an ageing workforce, resentment towards both colliery owners and central government, as well as the lack of modern equipment and methods. Although at least one governmental report claimed that mechanisation of the Tyneside and Northumberland coalfields had, "proceeded rapidly", it was also acknowledged that this modernising process had, "now nearly reached its limit."[160] Meanwhile, at least

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[158] Supple, B, *The history of the British Coal Industry Volume 4. 1913-1946 The Political Economy of Decline* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p 500.
[159] *Ibid*, pp 497-590.
[160] NA: BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, Subsection: Coal, 1943.

one expert witness from the area, Dr H S Houldsworth (The Fuel and Power Controller for the North East Region), stressed the effect of the ageing workforce on productivity to the official Committee charged with investigating the decline of the British coal industry.[161] The industrial strife that blighted the industry during the war will be discussed in a later chapter but it is plain from the existing records that the coal industry more than any other was affected by the perceived shortcomings of both its workforce and its managers.

The necessity of regulating wartime production resulted in many factories switching production to essential war materials in order to obtain orders from various government ministries, several factories were also requisitioned directly by the government. Increased demands for war materials also led to the opening, or in some cases re-opening, of new factories and industrial concerns. A wartime report on Tyneside included a list of some sixteen firms that had either switched their production or had been newly opened. These firms ranged from the re-opening of the Armstrong-Whitworth shipyard at Walker, working on Admiralty contracts and employing 1,200 workers, to the Bushboard Company Ltd which had switched production from veneered plywood to making unspecified aircraft components, the company employed just 27 people. The Metal Box Company Ltd, which opened new premises in Foundry Lane, Newcastle, in order to manufacture Jerricans, was in many ways typical of the newly opened factories on wartime Tyneside. Of average size, the factory employed 333 people in 1943, the majority of the workforce were female.[162] A complete list contained within a Board of Trade report names more than 30 separate companies that had either switched production or had newly opened in order to produce important war materials. This list extends to naming the main engineering

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[161] NA: CAB 87/92. Papers of the Committee on the Coal Mining Industry, May 14th 1942.
[162] NA: BT 64/3260. Report by Mr Weber, Control of Factory & Storage Premises, Board of Trade, Newcastle, to Mr Fairweather, Board of Trade, July 21st 1943.

companies on Tyneside and gives the products that they manufactured. This list shows the overall importance of Tyneside industry to the war effort not only in the traditional fields of armaments and shipping but also in terms of the many lesser items of necessary equipment such as webbing, uniforms, medical supplies, and the aforementioned jerricans.[163]

One very noticeable feature of the wartime expansion of Tyneside industry was the opportunities that were presented to the women of the area. Traditionally, Tyneside had a much smaller percentage of female workers than other areas of Britain in part due to its dependence upon heavy engineering work. The wartime creation of jobs in the clothing industry and the light engineering sector, combined with the loss of an estimated 50,000 Tyneside men from industry to the services,[164] meant that there was a greater willingness to employ women in work for which it was previously thought they would not be suitable. Many of the newer firms opening on Tyneside immediately before the war or during the conflict would continue to employ substantial numbers of women after the end of the conflict. The greatest expansion in female employment on Tyneside was in the fields of clothing and the manufacturing of foodstuffs: industries not traditionally associated with the area, but necessary all the same if Tyneside was to diversify and survive the industrial slump that would almost inevitably follow the war. The increased profitability of several of the Tyneside heavy industrial concerns also led them to branch out into fields that employed more women than had hitherto been the case. Swan's, for example, had a controlling share in the Tyne Plywood Works Ltd. This factory employed a substantial number of female employees, working on various products for the

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[163] *Ibid*, Post War Report on Tyneside, attached documents, 1943.
[164] NA: BT 64/3260. Board of Trade: Report on Tyneside, 1943.

Ministry of Aircraft Production.[165] The factory was to prove a major success and continued to earn large annual profits despite the initial teething problems centred on the training of new workers and retention of the workforce, once trained.[166] The company was eventually sold, at a profit, to Great Universal Stores in 1945.[167]

As we shall see later, the bombing attacks on Tyneside had a relatively limited effect on industrial output. Many of the local shipyards suffered damage as a result of air raids, but none of the yards were ever prevented from operating, whilst the Luftwaffe failed to substantially damage any of the important armaments manufacturers in the area. The main damage was in areas such as North Shields, which had several minor factories producing war material but was important largely due to its docks facilities and shipyards. Reasons for the failure of the Luftwaffe campaign are perplexingly diverse but foremost amongst them was the mistaken importance that was paid to bombing residential areas of London in the hope of destroying morale. The effectiveness of Luftwaffe bombing on Tyneside was further degraded by the task of having to bomb at night. Such raids were often poorly co-ordinated and inaccurate. The losses suffered in an early attempt to bomb the area during daylight had shaken the commanders of Luftflotte Five, based in Scandinavia, and this, when combined with the piecemeal nature of attacks in the north of Britain, served to protect the heavy industries of Tyneside. The failure of the German High Command to effectively target Tyneside is surprising. For there is no doubt that the concentration of heavy engineering, armaments production, port facilities, shipyards, and goods transfer yards made the area an important production facility but also a key supply node. A crippling attack on the area would have represented a severe blow for

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[165] TWAS: DS/SWH/1/7. Swan Hunters & Wigham Richardson, minutes of board meeting, May 6th 1941, p 18.
[166] *Ibid*, July 10th 1941 - March 17th 1942, pp 28-47.
[167] *Ibid*, April 5th 1945, p 167.

the national war effort. The sheer number of Tyneside firms that were deemed to be important enough to be placed on the Special Action List (Air Raid Warnings) emphasises the significance of the area to the nation during time of war. These firms all received advance warning of any possible air attack and were continually updated by the local ARP authorities on the progress of any raid. The list for Newcastle alone includes 22 separate sites. These range from the Post Office Sorting Station on Forth Road, the colliery at Benwell, Vickers-Armstrongs factories, to R Sinclairs Tobacco Works on Westgate Road.[168]

It is clear that Tyneside was indeed an arsenal in the nation's overall war effort. The area was strategically vital, largely due to the collection of vital industries that were based in the region. That the authorities considered Tyneside an area of special danger implies that they believed that, due to its nature, the area would be one of the first to be singled out for sustained attack. The contribution made by the shipbuilders, marine engineers, and repair yards, of Tyneside were significant in keeping the vital supply lines open, across the Atlantic, to Russia, and further afield. Vickers-Armstrongs remained one of the very few plants that were capable of designing and manufacturing large artillery pieces and naval guns, whilst the company also led the field, at least at the outbreak of war, in the area of armoured vehicle design. Without the coal that was shipped from the Tyne it is equally clear that the manufacturing plants in other parts of the country, especially South East England, would have struggled to maintain peak levels of production and the importance of the Tyne as a port facility is reflected in the efforts that were made by Royal Navy minesweepers to ensure that the river and coast was kept clear of enemy mines. During the period 1st June 1940 to 31st July 1940, of the fifteen ships sunk

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[168] TWAS: PA/NC/5/17. Newcastle City Police files re: Air Raid Warnings. Categories of premises receiving special warnings, 1940.

sailing to or from Tyneside eight, or 53%, were transporting coal. Several more of those sunk were returning north after delivering coal cargoes.[169] The traditional manufacturing skills of the Tyneside workforce also aided in the transition from peacetime production to wartime standards, both in increasing working effort and in ensuring the smooth conversion to wartime material production that occurred in many factories.

[169] Figures extrapolated from North East Diary 1939-1945 website [http://www.bpears.org.uk/NE-Diary/], 2003.

Chapter 2

The War in the Workplace

Development and the Same Problems

The Tyneside area's war effort was dominated by heavy industry, such as shipbuilding, engineering, armaments and coal production.[170] Most of these industries had been hit very hard during the recession of the 1930's and it was hoped that wartime conditions would promulgate a recovery. Despite the malaise that had affected most of the decade before the war there had been some efforts by both central and local government to improve the situation. The North East Coast was designated as one of the Special Areas requiring inward investment and companies were given financial incentives to open new branch factories in these areas or, in some cases, to relocate completely. Large cities, including Newcastle upon Tyne, in the Special Areas were usually exempt from the proposal. Statistics show that this scheme had attracted significant numbers of firms to the area. In total, 89 new branch factories were opened in the North East area. The majority of these, 64 altogether, or 72% of the total, were opened during the period from 1936-1938. Of the branch factories opened nationwide in the years from 1932-1938 over 15% were opened in the North East area. However, the major area of the North East to benefit from this scheme was Yorkshire. Redevelopment in the North East Coast area, which included both Tyneside and other severely depressed industrial locations, was limited, with only 17 new branch factories, just 19% of the North East total and only 3% nationally, being

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[170] See Chapter 1.

created in this area.[171] This compares with the figures for Greater London, which accounted for a quarter of the total, and the Midlands, which made up 20% of the national total.

The build up to war had begun with the re-armament process in the late 1930's and this period had been marked by a large increase in the number of government contracts that were placed in the hands of Tyneside industries. The actual outbreak of war saw an initial quickening of this process with larger orders for shipping, armaments, and armoured vehicles being placed in the first months of the conflict. Now, the traditional heavy industries of Tyneside would once again prove crucial in the national war effort and the importance of maintaining and, if possible, improving levels of productivity became an essential wartime objective. This would of course result in serious levels of overspecialisation on Tyneside and would instigate an artificial boom in industries that had been failing in peacetime. One of the keys to the maintenance of the wartime levels of production on Tyneside would be the morale of the local workforce. It was realised that, although Tyneside did not have as poor a reputation for industrial disharmony as Clydeside, some necessary wartime measures would prove unpopular with the workers and that it was essential to maintain industrial harmony if the government's production plans were not to be severely, if not irreparably, damaged by strikes and industrial unrest.

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[171] For more details see Heim, C E, 'Industrial Organization and Regional Development in Interwar Britain', *The Journal of Economic History*, 43, 4 (December 1983), pp 937-939.

The Industrial Situation: The Workers

During the First World War the industries of Tyneside, in common with the national experience, had been badly affected in 1914 by the rush of men volunteering for the armed forces.[172] Given the importance of the Tyneside industries to the national war effort, it was thought vital that plans should be put into place before the outbreak of war to prevent such a crisis occurring again. This was why a group of trades, including those involving armaments, shipbuilding, mining and engineering, as well as farming, were declared to be reserved occupations.[173] Combined with the later classification of 'protected establishments' this ensured that workers in these industries could not leave to join the armed forces, or indeed, to find other work that was deemed not to be vital to the war effort.[174] These regulations, whilst impinging on the workers' rights to seek employment of their own choosing, were widely seen as necessary for the war effort and were welcomed by the major Tyneside employers as they ensured that they would have a core workforce sufficient to cope with expected demand and would not lose skilled workers.

The population of Newcastle upon Tyne was reduced as a result of the war, although the official figures do not include military personnel stationed in the city. If these were included then the population figures would show an overall increase. As it was, the four years between the outbreak of war and 1943 saw the population fall by 34,587 from a 1939 peak of 293,400 to 258,813, a decrease of approximately 11%.[175] This was largely a result of many men joining the armed forces, whilst others, both men and women, moved out of the area, relocating to areas as widespread as

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[172] Clarke, J, *Building Ships on the North East Coast, a Labour of Love, Risk and Pain Vol. 2: c1914-1980* (Whitley Bay: Bewick Press, 1979), p 153.
[173] Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 51.
[174] *Ibid*, p 235.
[175] NA: BT64/3260. Report of the Board of Trade (Post War Reconstruction Section), 1943.

Scotland, Cheshire, the Midlands, and London, in order to perform work valuable to the war effort. It would appear that most of the people who left the area were either first time workers or that the shortfall was made up for by an influx of workers into the area. In 1939 the insured working population consisted of 132,163 persons (some 45% of the population of the city) whilst four years later this had fallen to 130,956 people (although, due to declining overall population figures, this represented an increase in the insured percentage of total population to some 50%). It would appear therefore that although the number of insured persons decreased it still represented an overall increase in the ratio of insured persons to total population. This would presumably be a result of the development of new jobs and the increased availability of government orders in the heavy industries. There was a readily available source of labour from those who were still unemployed at the start of the war. On Tyneside, even as late as 1939, the unemployment rate was still 2% higher than the national average, of 10.8%.[176]

Tyneside continued to be dominated by the heavy industries, such as engineering and shipbuilding although the mainly service sector industries of commerce and distribution employed a substantial portion of Tyneside residents.[177] Despite the importance of the service sector, which was largely restricted to the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, the traditional industries of engineering, shipbuilding and coal mining accounted for nearly one third of the insured male population.[178] The local engineering industry, as discussed in the previous chapter, was dominated by eight firms who all employed more than 300 persons ranging from Donkin and Company with 350 workers to Vickers which employed 23,000 employees at the height of the war (the other firms were C A Parsons Ltd, R & W Hawthorne Lesley,

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[176] *Ibid.*
[177] *Ibid.*
[178] NA: BT64/3260. Report on Tyneside by Professor Allen, 1944.

Robert Stevenson & Hawthorne Ltd, Northern Coach Builders Ltd, Metal Box Company Ltd, and Mitchell Bearings). Engineering on Tyneside, including the smaller employers, was pre-occupied with governmental contracts, mainly for the Admiralty, the Ministry of Aircraft Production, and the Ministry of Supply.

Throughout the immediate pre-war period the Tyne ports had been responsible for approximately 50% of the North East's exports. These exports were largely dominated by coal and engineering products, whilst the most commonly imported goods were dairy produce, meat, and grain.[179] The importance of the River Tyne as a port was only increased by the war as important materiel was both exported from and imported into the area in even greater amounts. Key to the successful operation of the port was the efficiency of the dock workers. Responsible for unloading and loading ships, they were under increasing pressure to work faster and more effectively than ever before so that the turn-around time of shipping in ports could be reduced. Whilst this led to increasing levels of fatigue and stress it also granted the dockers a degree of power that they had seldom experienced before, despite the poor labour relations that traditionally existed in the industry; they had suddenly become vital to the national and local war effort.

As it became necessary to divert imports to the western ports of Britain and to the north, away from London, the importance of the dockers, nationally, had been recognised early in the war. This enforced policy led to subsequent transport difficulties and had forced Bevin to formulate a registration scheme in June 1940 for all dockers so that they could, if it became necessary, be transferred to the west coast ports. This was yet another factor that eroded the ability of a worker to sell his labour in a free market. The measure was defended by the government claiming that the turn

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[179] *Ibid.*

around rate of ships was too slow and that this resulted in the amount of imported goods being needlessly, and dangerously, reduced. The dockers of the west coast were to benefit from governmental policy as regional port directors were appointed and dock labourers were registered as a permanent labour force, thus ending the pernicious vagaries of the casual system that had, up until then, applied.[180] Unfortunately, this scheme at first applied only to the west coast ports of Merseyside and Clydeside, those dock labourers who were still needed in huge numbers on Tyneside gained little or no benefit from the scheme and continued to work, in most respects, as they had before the war, albeit at a much greater pace.

Simmering resentment amongst the Tyneside stevedores finally reached boiling point on May 14th, 1942. Since the start of the war there had been several minor strikes involving dock workers: eleven at Newcastle Quay and three at the Albert Edward Dock in North Shields.[181] These had been small in scale and short-lasting in nature, despite the disruption they caused. Lack of faith in the local agreements, the national union, and the national arbitration methods combined with the fact that recent illegal strikes, such as that at Betteshanger Colliery in Kent where over 1,000 miners had been summonsed for striking illegally but where prosecution had proven problematic, had gone relatively unpunished had emboldened the attitudes of a majority of the dockers.[182] The resentment between the dockers, nationally, and their employees was both long standing and bitter.[183] On Tyneside, distrust had been steadily increasing for sometime and the point had been reached where neither side trusted the other as can be seen reflected in the comment of one docker to the

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[180] For a more detailed discussion of this subject see Calder, A, *The People's War*, pp 232-233.
[181] NA: LAB 10/208. Official Report to the Right Honourable Ernest Bevin MP, Minister of Labour, into the problems surrounding dock workers on the Tyne, June 1942, p 1.
[182] See Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 396. Also Croucher, R, *Engineers at War 1939-1945* (London: Merlin, 1982), p 217.
[183] For example, see Phillips, J, 'British Dock Workers and the Second World War: the limits of social change, *Scottish Labour History Society Journal*, 30, pp 87-103.

committee established to officially report into the problems in the area. When asked why the dockers had frequently taken action without even beginning negotiations he admitted that, whilst the question was a common sense one, the men "were not dealing with common sense employers."[184] Such strong distrust augured poorly for the future efficiency of the Tyne docks.

The first major strike, when it came, was sparked by the actions of one firm and revolved around the unloading of a single ship. An American cargo ship, the *SS Winona*, damaged whilst carrying a cargo of munitions to Russia, had put in to the Tyne, docked at 22 Shed on the Quayside, for unloading and repairs. The dockers of Messrs Tait and Son of Newcastle were engaged to unload the cargo. The standard rate of pay for day work on a cargo such as this was 23/- per day (approximately £46 today).[185] Due, however, to the urgency of the cargo it was proposed that the men should work a two shift pattern beginning at 6 a.m. until 2 p.m. and then 2 p.m. until 10p.m. In the words of the official submitted report, "The afternoon shift had received some payment in the way of an advance and immediately raised objection to the method of computing the amount and refused to continue discharging the ship until more favourable terms were conceded."[186] Rather than allow the national or local arbitration process to take place the 172 men immediately ceased work at 2 p.m.

The men involved in the action knew that the strike was illegal but stated when asked that they would not be prosecuted because others had taken similar action.[187] The local Conciliation Officer, the Port Manager, and the Deputy Regional

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[184] [184] NA: LAB 10/208. Official Report to the Right Honourable Ernest Bevin, MP, Minister of Labour, into the problems surrounding dock workers on the Tyne, June 1942, p 4.
[185] Figures given for present-day values are arrived at using the method in, Thomas, D, *An Underground at War. Spivs, Deserters, Racketeers and Civilians in the Second World War* (London: John Murray, 2003), p xiv.
[186] NA: LAB 10/208. Report of the Ministry of Labour (Industrial Relations Department), No 1 Region, Newcastle upon Tyne to the Ministry of Labour, May 14th 1942.
[187] *Ibid*, May 16th 1942.

Controller all agreed, after Mr Tarbit of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers (NUGMW) had reported that his efforts to persuade the strikers to return to work had met with a "point blank refusal",[188] that the strikers should immediately be prosecuted and that the military should be brought in to unload the cargo. Using the military to take over from striking dockers appears to have been a relatively common wartime tactic on the Tyne.[189]

By this time the dangers of a single strike could be seen by the spread of the action to other workers employed on the docks in the form of sympathy strikes. 90 men of James Kirkley and Company who had been employed unloading cargo from the *SS Guinan* refused to continue work whilst 10 dock employees of the London and North Eastern Railway withdrew their labour and the employees of the Co-operative Wholesale Society's Grain Warehouse followed suit. These sympathetic actions resulted in severe delays to the unloading and loading of vessels, including the *SS Tahsinia* and the *SS Cortachy*.[190]

Undoubtedly, both local and national authorities were worried by this trend amongst the Tyneside dockyard workers to put their own interests and those of their fellow workers above the national war effort, or the importance of their role in supplying the nation and its allies. The men themselves admitted to an official inquiry that they had disregarded established negotiation procedure and that they had frequently taken illegal industrial action.[191] Government fears were expressed that the strike action could, if wrongly handled, spread to other ports.[192] It was thought that this was especially likely given that the local branch of the union involved, the

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[188] *Ibid*, May 19th 1942.
[189] See *The Times*, October 3rd 1944, p 4. Also October 5th 1944, p 2.
[190] NA: LAB 10/208. Report of the Ministry of Labour (Industrial Relations Department), No 1 Region, Newcastle upon Tyne to the Ministry of Labour, May 19th 1942.
[191] *Ibid*, official report to the Right Honourable Ernest Bevin MP, Minister of Labour, into the problems surrounding dock workers on the Tyne, June 1942, p 3.
[192] *Ibid*, report of the Northern Regional Officer, May 19th 1942.

NUGMW, had 3,422 members involved in the docks, and a total of 70,489 members locally.[193] Indeed it was being rumoured that the strike would spread quickly to the Tyne Dock workers who were said to be in sympathy with the workers from Tait and Son although this feeling seems to have passed by May 20th. The subsequent lack of support from the workers of Tyne Dock is possibly attributable to the strong disciplinary action taken against several Tyne Dock workers who had refused to relocate to Glasgow earlier in the week.[194] Despite the concerns the authorities were willing to hazard using the threat of prosecution to force the dockers to return to work in this instance, at least initially.

Permission was immediately sought by the regional authorities to secure permission to both prosecute the strikers and to use the military to unload the munitions. This was a repeat of First World War action when the Army had often been utilised as make-shift dock workers. Relevant permissions were quickly given by the Ministry of Labour and the army began unloading the *SS Winona* the next morning at 6 a.m. [195] Meanwhile a "very special approach" was made to the Magistrate's Clerk to arrange a speedy hearing for the 172 strikers from Tait and Son but not the other workers, despite the protests of Mr J Atkinson, the Port Manager, that all 500 men involved should be prosecuted.[196] This hearing was subsequently arranged for only three days time on May 22nd at 11 a.m. at Newcastle City Police Court.[197] The Docks Corporation wanted to summarily dismiss the workers who had come out on strike. This would have resulted in those of military age being eligible for call up to military service. However, the Ministry of Labour discouraged this

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[193] *Ibid*, official report to the Right Honourable Ernest Bevin MP, Minister of Labour, into the problems surrounding dock workers on the Tyne, June 1942, p 1.
[194] *Ibid*, report of the Chief Industrial Commissioner, May 20th 1942.
[195] *Ibid*, telegram from Ministry of Labour at 1.41 p.m. May 16th 1942.
[196] *Ibid*, report of Northern Regional Officer, May 19th 1942.
[197] *Ibid*, telegram from Northern Regional Officer of the Ministry of Labour at 12.45 p.m. May 19th 1942.

action as it could complicate the issues of the strike and evoke sympathy for the strikers concerned. Both the Ministry of Labour and the Home Office agreed that an official inquiry should be appointed after the strike had ended so that ways of improving both the discipline and management of the Tyne docks.[198]

The strikers union, the NUGMW, "entirely dissociated itself" from the men and assured the government that no support would be forthcoming from the national organisation.[199] Disagreement between the national leadership of the union and the local branch (number 9) was highlighted by the fact that, despite this promise, the men's solicitor was paid for by their local branch. This distrust that existed between the national union organisation and the local branches on the one hand and the membership on the other was said to have been a major motivational factor behind the persistent industrial disruption that affected the Tyne docks.[200] This was a reflection of the regional attitudes that pervaded the industry and was to remain a key factor in disputes throughout the war.

158 of the men from Tait and Son were prosecuted on May 22nd 1942. The remaining fourteen men were said to be "officials and checkers" who were not directly involved in the strike.[201] All of the accused men agreed that they would abide by the judgement imposed upon one of their number as a representative of all of the men involved. The case of Mr James Gilmour was heard and, despite protestations from the solicitor employed by the Union, Fred Lambert, of Messrs Stanford and Lambert of Newcastle upon Tyne, that the case had been brought too quickly (a charge ignored because the speedy resolution of the case was said to be in the national

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[198] *Ibid*, Ministry of Labour reply to request from Newcastle upon Tyne Docks Corporation, 19th May 1942.
[199] *Ibid*, report of the Chief Industrial Commissioner, May 20th 1942.
[200] *Ibid*, official report to the Right Honourable Ernest Bevin MP, Minister of Labour, into the problems surrounding dock workers on the Tyne, June 1942, p 3.
[201] *Ibid*, report of Northern Regional Officer, May 26th 1942.

interest), the Magistrate found in favour of the government and imposed a fine of £5 per man (approximately £200 today) plus 2/- costs (or approximately £4 today). The men were given just 28 days in which to pay or face a term of 30 days imprisonment. The main thrust of the prosecution argument had been that the strike was clearly illegal, the men knew this, that their actions had an adverse effect on the attempts to assist Russia (an argument clearly designed to erode any public support for the strikers), and that by taking strike action the men were nullifying the bravery of the sailors, many of whom came from this region, who endeavoured to supply cargo in dangerous wartime circumstances.[202]

Despite the imposition of this substantial fine and the subsequent threat of imprisonment, the strike continued unabated. The strikers organised daily meetings to ensure that they could keep up to date with latest developments and to express their feelings. At these meetings they remained resolute, resentful, and defiant of the authorities. Official intelligence reports stated that the striking men had "come to regard a strike not only as profitable but safe."[203] The continuation of the action was a growing cause for concern amongst several government departments including the Department of War Transport who expressed their anxiety in several official memorandums.[204]

Behind the scenes increasingly efficacious, from the government and employers point of view, negotiations were ongoing. By the 1st of June a peace deal had been brokered, largely thanks to the efforts of the National Industry Officer, Captain Mark Hewitson. Captain Hewitson claimed that whilst the men had "suspected an attempt to evade an old agreement" by their employers and thus had a

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[202] *Ibid.*
[203] *Ibid*, excerpt from Weekly Intelligence Reports, May 30th 1942.
[204] *Ibid*, memo from Mr S S Wilson of the Ministry of War Transport to the Ministry of Labour, May 27th 1942.

strong case for arbitration they had placed themselves in a vulnerable position by knowingly embarking on an illegal strike.[205] After accepting the peace deal the men held a meeting early the next morning and voted by a large majority to return immediately and unconditionally to work. Ironically, many of them were employed the next day in loading the original cargo of the *SS Winona* aboard the two replacement vessels.[206]

After the return of the men to work there were requests, from several quarters, for the fines to remain un-enforced by the local authorities. These requests would appear to have been unofficially granted as correspondence indicates that although the Home Secretary could not officially petition for the fines to be left in abeyance, he could hint that this may be the best solution as further action against the men could only lead to a greater level of anger and may have caused more problems than it solved in the local area.[207]

The crux of the persistent problems in the industry on Tyneside was said to be the lack of trust that existed between the men and both their employers and their national union officials. The men fervently believed that the national union was incapable of representing local issues in the manner that was required and, instead of following their union's instructions, workers on Tyneside increasingly viewed the words of their union representatives as simply advice, to be ignored as required.[208] In many cases of industrial action the union's local leadership was forced to admit that not only was it powerless to convince the men to return to work but that in several cases it had not even been notified of a strike in advance.[209] When combined these

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[205] *Ibid*, report of Northern Regional Officer, June 3rd 1942.
[206] *Ibid*, June 2nd 1942.
[207] *Ibid*, correspondence between Home Office, Ministry of Labour, and NUGMW, June 12th-16th 1942.
[208] *Ibid*, official report to the Right Honourable Ernest Bevin MP, Minister of Labour, into the problems surrounding dock workers on the Tyne, June 1942, p 5.
[209] *Ibid*.

factors led to significant damage to the reputation of the union, both at a local and national level.

The evidence that representatives of the workers gave to the official committee investigating Tyneside indicated that the majority of problems with the national union stemmed from local resentments. The men wanted local problems to be solved at a purely local level and when any national body became involved the levels of trust subsequently faltered as it had become widely accepted that outsiders would not understand the position of the industry on Tyneside. Much of this distrust stemmed from the problem of the lieu rate issue. The lieu rate was the grade of pay that had been agreed upon in the 1920's for the handling of certain cargoes, including munitions, and had been established at 23/- as opposed to the national norm which was significantly lower. This meant that, through extensive use of the lieu rate, the dockers on Tyneside had secured a "privileged position for themselves" when compared to other areas of the country.[210] From examples such as this, it has become increasingly clear that, far from always pulling together, there were some industries on Tyneside where the workers saw themselves in a purely local context and refused to submit to procedures that would have meant a reduction in wages, despite reassurances that this would be in the national interest.

The industrial unrest within the dock industry proved to be a continual problem on Tyneside with another strike breaking out in the late summer of 1944 over the removal of ship hatch covers. Again, this involved approximately 600 dockyard workers. The military was again used for the loading and unloading of ships whilst the Chief Industrial Officer of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, Captain Mark Hewitson, alleged that the strike was a deliberate sabotage of the war

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[210] *Ibid*, p 7.

effort and that Newcastle had been a particularly troublesome spot in the dock industry throughout the war, with a number of strikes, all of which were illegal, and that the dockers in this area were now completely "out of hand".[211] The Minister of War Transport, Ernest Bevin, agreed and, in combative mood, stated that "the services at the docks will be maintained."[212] As a result of this strike, and further allegations that union officials could no longer control their members, the local branch of the NUGMW was closed down on October 4th 1944. A new branch was opened but members had to firstly swear to abide by the rules of the Union's national leadership.[213]

Strikes on Tyneside continued to be a prime concern for both the local authorities and the national government as they grew more common towards the end of the war. Although there were a limited number of strikes during the first year and a half of the war this period, when the country was in its most vulnerable position, appears to have been one of relative accord on Tyneside. Despite the lack of strike action, however, it is clear that much resentment was still bubbling under the surface with pre-war tensions between workers and employers having been temporarily subsumed, to a large extent, by the national situation. These issues were still under the surface and could be brought bubbling through by seemingly minor incidents and, later in the war, when the national situation did not appear so desperate the workers were more likely to exercise their newly gained importance and express their feelings in the form of illegal strikes and stoppages.

One way of analysing the mood of the workers on Tyneside is to study the changes in their political attitudes, especially the levels of support for the parties to the far left of the political spectrum. It has long been argued, by historians such as

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[211] *The Times*, October 3rd 1944, p 4.
[212] *Ibid.*
[213] *The Times*, October 5th 1944, p 2.

Calder,[214] that the 'People's War' resulted in an increase in the levels of political awareness (in actual fact a term for relaying the fact that the electorate had become more left wing) amongst the working classes. The British Communist Party, which until the invasion of the USSR had been opposed to the war, made committed attempts to garner support amongst the workers of Tyneside throughout the war, especially those involved in the traditional heavy industries. In the first year of the war, however, it would appear that their attempts did not meet with much success on Tyneside, or indeed nationally.[215] Intelligence reports continually recount instances of poorly attended meetings. Indeed, by May 1940 there was an alleged "consensus" that meetings held by the party should have been banned.[216] This may have been Newcastle City Police placing an agreeable emphasis on the situation in order to stifle the activities of party members, who were largely seen by the authorities as rabble rousers and malcontents.

As the war progressed the BCP began to gather more popular support on Tyneside. This was largely due to the changing wartime situation, increased bombing, shortages, and the policy of advocating greater ARP measures and shelter facilities adopted by the BCP during 1940. The initial increase in popularity can be seen in the steadily rising numbers who attended meetings and by the sums of money raised at such assemblies. At one such gathering, in November 1940, more than 600 people had attended and £75 (£3,000 today) was raised by means of a collection.[217] When a meeting was addressed by Harry Pollitt over 700 people attended, and again a

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[214] See Calder, A, *The People's War*, pp 569-586.
[215] Pelling, H, *Britain and the Second World War* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1972), p 250. For a debate on the Communist influence in British engineering see Croucher, R, *Engineers at War*, also Bornstein, S, and Richardson, A, *Two Steps Back: Communists and the Wider Labour Movement – Study in the Relationship between Vanguard and Class, 1935-45* (London: Socialist Platform, 1982).
[216] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, October 17th 1939 – May 9th 1940.
[217] *Ibid*, November 23rd 1940.

substantial sum was raised. However, Pollitt's speech was hardly radical.[218] The Party continued its policy of representing the working man and his family by organising voluntary pressure groups, such as the Newcastle Housewives Guild, to campaign for greater food supplies or better air raid shelters and by opening advice centres in the aftermath of heavy air raids.[219]

The entry of the USSR into the war on the allied side caused the Party to radically change tack, and the focus of subsequent meetings became the need for greater productivity to beat Hitler and to provide aid to the Russian people. This need for unity between the people of Tyneside and those of Russia was expressed forcefully by Willie Gallagher, MP, the only BCP Member of Parliament through the war, when he addressed a meeting of more than 1,200 people at the City Hall in Newcastle.[220] Throughout 1941 the BCP continued to hold meetings which were well attended and by November of that year the Party was being described in intelligence reports as "very active".[221] Local support for the Party had increased to such an extent that the Party was able to book large halls and to pay for speakers to travel from other parts of the country.[222] The formation of Anglo-Soviet Committees with the purposes of securing aid for the Russian front enabled some of the middle and upper classes to join in with the Party activities, those attending the Anglo-Soviet Committee meetings were described by the Police as being "people of a better type", and led to a significant increase in local membership.[223] Throughout 1942 the BCP continued to gather support on Tyneside, thanks largely to a determined recruitment drive, and there were concerns that the Party was attempting to secure a hold over

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[218] *Ibid*, January 4th 1941.
[219] *Ibid*, March 14th 1941, and September 12th 1941.
[220] *Ibid*, July 18th 1941.
[221] *Ibid*, November 7th 1941.
[222] *Ibid*, November 21st 1941.
[223] *Ibid*, November 7th 1941.

both the Shop Stewards Movement and the local shipyard apprentices. Despite these concerns the Party line was still to increase production and to aid the war effort in every way possible.[224]

The local branch of the BCP demonstrated how faithful it was to the war effort at the time when a shipyard strike led to the Party advising its members not to strike and to remain at their duties, the Shop Stewards Movement was in agreement with the BCP line and the strike was short lived finding little public support.[225] The lack of support given to the Total Time strike by engineering workers in October 1942 was significant. The action was the first serious industrial dispute since the ban on the *Daily Worker* had been lifted and the party made it absolutely clear that it not only did not support the strike but actively opposed the action, describing the strike as being "a disgrace to all concerned".[226] The BCP, despite (or perhaps because of) its strong links with the engineering unions, continued to oppose the strike and did everything in its power to halt it. The Party leader, Harry Pollitt, himself an ex-boilermaker, again travelled to Tyneside, this time to contact local shop stewards in an attempt to persuade them to do everything possible to bring an end to the stoppage.[227] Throughout the remainder of the war the BCP continued to receive support but this appears to have been fading by mid 1944. It would appear that some of the workers on Tyneside did support the BCP as a means of protecting their rights but many more appear to have been attracted to the party out of an initial feeling of solidarity with Russia. This was a feeling that lasted for a couple of years but was not enough, in the long term, to provide a lasting political foundation of substantial support. From this evidence it would seem that the workers of Tyneside were not willing to back BCP

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[224] *Ibid*, May 26th 1942.
[225] *Ibid*, October 9th 1942.
[226] Croucher, R, *Engineers*, p 183.
[227] *Ibid*.

policies short of an initial feeling of comradeship with an allied country. Those who supported the Party in order to secure their working rights and to fight the employers were dismayed by the shift in party line after Russia was attacked and this ensured a loss of many of the Party's more committed supporters.

Perhaps the most notorious strike to occur on Tyneside during the war was that of the shipyard apprentices at the end of March 1944. Once again a Communist subversive element was suspected of involvement. This strike was seen as so significant that it has been described by some socialists as marking "the high point of industrial militancy during the war".[228] The strike began as a result of dissatisfaction in the coal mining industry. The severe strikes that had affected this industry were viewed with a great deal of alarm by the government and with output steadily dropping whilst wartime demand steadily increased the issue of nationalisation of the industry in order to give the government more direct control became more important. One result of this was that the Bevin ballot scheme was given greater emphasis. This scheme was designed to summarily direct roughly 10% of all apprentices to the mines in order to boost production. This measure was hugely unpopular with the apprentices in the shipyards of Tyneside. The apprentices felt that they were being asked unfairly to give up their rights and to leave behind the hope of becoming a skilled worker to go down the mines with no guarantee of being given their old jobs back at the end of hostilities. Whilst apprentices had previously been seen as a conservative element in the industrial spectrum, they were not allowed to strike or to join a union in many cases, the war had seen this group emerge as a newly militant group, prepared to fight for their rights.

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[228] Dabb, T, 'Official Secrets', *Socialist Review*, 185 (April 1995), p 3.

The apprentices organised themselves into an unofficial union called the Tyneside Apprentices' Guild under the leadership of one of their number, James William Davy, an ex-member of a communist organisation.[229] This organisation was described by one member as being "the government of the apprentices, by the apprentices, for the apprentices".[230] Despite this claim it is clear that the TAG was, from its inception, heavily influenced by political parties. Although the apprentices themselves were described as being apolitical, the local branch of the Independent Labour Party (including Dan Smith and Ken Skethaway) along with members of the Workers International League lent much support and advice from the very start.[231] The apprentices appeared to have allowed time for negotiation of their grievances, which were aired well in advance, but when there was no official reply they declared their intention to strike, allegedly with the backing of their families and workmates.

The unions, however, did not support the action and throughout negotiations refused to recognise the Apprentices' Guild as an official body. At the beginning of the strike an open air meeting between the unions and some 5,000 apprentices at Wallsend resulted in an impasse when the unions made it abundantly clear that they would not back the strikers and that they would not negotiate with the representatives of the Apprentices' Guild.[232] Despite this lack of support the Tyneside apprentices were described in the national press as being in an "aggressive mood".[233] Although the strike, supported in other parts of the country to varying degrees, lasted only a fortnight, by April 11th the Tyne Shipbuilders Association was stating that 70% of

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[229] Bornstein, S, and Richardson, A, *War and the International. A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1937-1949* (London: Socialist Platform, 1986), p 115.
[230] Dabb, T, 'Official Secrets', p 3.
[231] Bornstein, S, and Richardson, A, *War and the International*, pp 115-119.
[232] *The Times*, April 1st 1944, p 4.
[233] *Ibid.*

apprentices had returned to work,[234] and officially did not achieve the demands of the apprentices it is also true that no Tyneside apprentice was sent to the coal mines.

The government responded to the strike by quickly investigating for subversive elements that possibly lay behind it. Whilst indicating that the apprentices had been duped into striking by these subversive elements the government attempted to distract attention from the real issue: that of dissatisfaction at the erosion of rights and the fact that the apprentices were more concerned with their future economic security than in assisting an industry essential to the national war effort. The paranoia surrounding Trotskyist manipulation was reflected in the experiences of Swan Hunter's in 1941 when a short, only a few hours, stoppage of work by apprentices after one of their number was sacked for breaking yard rules was blamed on "Communist elements" and their attempts to organise the apprentices for the purpose of taking industrial action.[235] The short stoppage was ended when the guilty apprentice agreed to pay a fine and was reinstated in his position. These were minor incidents that, in peacetime, would have been seen as insignificant but in the spirit of wartime paranoia were blown out of all proportion. The Trotskyists, and especially the Revolutionary Communist Party, were the main focus of this paranoia: Ernest Bevin thought that these agitators were the central motivators of illegal strikes.[236] In Newcastle, both the Trotskyists and the striking apprentices were aided by members of the ILP. One member of this party who later went on to achieve notoriety was T Dan Smith (1915-1993). Smith, who was also a member of the PPU, had helped with the initial meetings of the apprentices and made speeches in their support. He later went on to become leader, in 1960, of Newcastle City Council as a member of the

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[234] TWAS: 895/10. Tyne Shipbuilders Association minute book, special general meeting, April 11th 1944, p 217.
[235] TWAS: 978/8. North East Coast Shiprepairers Association, minute book, meeting of the Executive Committee, March 24th 1941, pp 200-201.
[236] Bullock, A, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, Volume 2* (London: Heinemann, 1967), p 269.

regular Labour Party. In this capacity he oversaw extensive changes to the structure of the city, at great architectural expense, but was jailed for corruption in the 1970s.[237]

By the summer of 1944 several Trotskyists had been charged with conspiring to incite the apprentices to strike and acting in furtherance of an illegal strike. The accused, Lambert Heaton Lee, Rawling Tearse, James Ritchie Haston and Angel Rosalie Keen, were tried at Newcastle assizes and sentences were passed on June 19th. The three men were all found guilty of acting in furtherance of an illegal strike but cleared of conspiracy and of incitement, whilst Mrs Keen was cleared of all charges.[238] Mr Lee, a South African national, and the organiser of the Revolutionary Communist Party, was jailed for a year. He was joined in the same sentence by Mr Tearse, who was the secretary of the Militant Workers' Federation and described as a "political agitator" by the police. Mr Haston, the national secretary and organiser of the Revolutionary Communist Party, was sent to prison for six months. Mrs Keen was given a nominal sentence and released immediately.[239] The trial only served to increase the "R.C.P.'s self-importance" and the convictions were subsequently quashed at appeal just three months later.[240] It is clear that the rights of these accused were violated. In an effort to obtain evidence the Newcastle Police had questioned Bill Davy, the leader of the TAG, for a period of 24 hours and had "threatened and cajoled" him into making a statement.[241] Furthermore, the authorities had failed to inform Mr Davy of his rights and were holding him without having cautioned him. In addition, thinly veiled threats to blacklist, arrest and imprison Mr Davy were made by the police during the interview process.[242]

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[237] See Todd, N, 'Ambition and Harsh Reality', in Ayris, I, *et al*, *Water under the Bridges*, pp 99-100.
[238] *The Times*, June 20th 1944, p 2.
[239] *Ibid.*
[240] Calder, A, *The People's War*, pp 441-442.
[241] Bornstein, S, and Richardson, A, *War and the International*, pp 120-121.
[242] Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 154.

The trial judge made it clear in his summing up of the case that the striking apprentices knew that the Bevin Ballot would not even affect the vast majority of their number.[243] That they were striking on behalf of the rights of all apprentices, and so this strike was simply being made on a point of principle: that being that the freedom of the apprentice to continue in his chosen profession overrode the national need. The fact that the government was seemingly willing to ride roughshod over the rights of the apprentices due to wartime conditions did not mean that the apprentices would accept such measures. Wartime necessities, especially this late in the war, would appear to be taking second place to the established work-place rights of the apprentices.[244]

The last two years of the war seem to have been characterised by a renewed willingness on the part of Tyneside workers to take strike action. This is in concert with the national trend, with the number of strikes in both 1944 and 1945 being more than double that of 1940. There were a greater number of strikes in the five years from 1941 than there had been in the fifteen years from 1926 to 1940. In total some 6,549,000 working days were lost due to strike action in the final two years of the war, whilst the total for the whole war, excluding 1939, was 10,963,940 days. 1944 was the single worst year, in terms of working days lost, since the depression haunted days of 1932.[245] The pattern of industrial action on Tyneside follows this model, characterised by few strikes in the crisis year of 1940 but a greater number in every year following. Such figures do not corroborate the traditional view of working people united behind the national war effort at any cost.

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[243] *The Times*, June 20th 1944, p 2.
[244] For a fuller discussion of the impact that the Tyneside Apprentice's Strike had had on labour laws in Britain, and for the credibility which it lent the RCP, see Bornstein, S, and Richardson, A, *War and the International*, pp 115-141.
[245] Thorpe, A, *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Era of the Two World Wars* (London: Longman, 1994), p 100.

Whilst mining remained, throughout the war, the greatest source of strikes and industrial unrest it is clear that the shipbuilding and repair industry on Tyneside, along with the associated engineering trades, was far from untroubled during the period. The earliest stoppage in the local industry that is deemed serious enough to be mentioned in official intelligence reports occurred in the summer of 1941 and involved the stoppage of work by riveters in various yards concerned over their rates of pay in comparison to other shipyard workers.[246] The pacification of the riveters appears to have been an ongoing problem with strikes occurring throughout the war. As late as April 1944 an emergency Joint Committee representing the Tyne and Wear Shipbuilders' Associations respectively was convened to discuss the concerns of the riveters.[247] Once again, pay seems to have been the motivation behind the action taken by the riveters. Demands for a minimum lieu rate of 30/- per day (£60 today) were made by the men despite a national agreement for a lesser sum having been reached on March 7th 1944. Once again showing the importance placed by some workers on purely regional bargaining as opposed to a national structure of pay and conditions. A compromise was eventually reached whereby the men would be paid a bonus of between five percent and ten percent depending on the work that they were involved in on that day.[248] The riveters seem to have become a target for allegations from local authorities as it was claimed to an official inquiry that some firms were keeping riveters employed under the Essential Workers Order despite the fact that they had no employment for them for substantial periods of time.[249]

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[246] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle City Police, September 12th 1941.
[247] TWAS: 895/10. Tyne Shipbuilders association, minute book, Emergency Joint Committee, April 25th 1944, pp 228-229.
[248] *Ibid.*
[249] NA: ADM1/15260. Summary of Statements made to the Financial Secretary of the Admiralty about Misuse of Shipyard Labour on Tyneside, July 1943, p 2.

Throughout 1942 there were reports of "unrest" within the industry.[250] Then a dispute occurred involving the drillers in the Fitting Out Department of Parsons Marine Steam turbine Company Ltd, at Wallsend, an incident compounded when drillers at William Doxford & Sons Ltd in Sunderland also came out in sympathy. Once again the key issue was rates of pay and after a lack of progress in discussions the matter was referred to the local Conciliation Officer of the Ministry of Labour and National Service. Despite further discussions an agreement could still not be met. To increase the difficulties of the industry the dispute spread top Swan Hunters' Neptune Works.[251] The year 1942 would appear to have been marked by poor relations in the engineering industry on the Tyne, including the Total Time strike. Relations were strained with several unions and worker's organisations including the National Union of Heating and Domestic and General Metal Workers; the National Society of Painters; the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (Tyne District); the Plumbers, Glaziers and Domestic Engineering Union; and the Amalgamated Slaters and Tilers Provident Society. Locally, the members of all of these organisations had been involved in confrontations with their employers during the year.[252]

These last workers did not come under the umbrella of shipbuilding but under the more widespread definition of engineering. On Tyneside however the majority of engineering work was concerned with the shipbuilding industry or armaments production. The engineering trades were commonly talked of in the same sentence as the shipbuilding workers and it would appear that they 'enjoyed' a reputation for even greater levels of industrial discontent. Indeed the first, "watershed",[253] area-wide

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[250] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle City Police, September 11th 1942-November 7th 1942.
[251] TWAS: EM/EN1/1/3. North East Coast Engineering Trades Employers Association, minute book, Standing Committee, September 15th 1942.
[252] *Ibid.*
[253] Croucher, R, *Engineers*, p180.

strike of the war occurred in the Tyneside engineering trade in late 1942. The dispute, which became known as the Total Time or Lying-On strike, occurred over what at first appeared to be a relatively minor issue: when the changing of how the working week was calculated due to demands of office staff. This change, which was supported by the engineering unions, would mean that the engineers would have been forced to accept a short week when the system initially changed over. Union negotiations came to a settlement whereby the workers would be paid a weekly average for this short week and would pay this sum back over the course of five weekly instalments. The new policy was met with a "flood of protests from the members."[254]

Within days at least eight local union branches had written to complain, with South Shields being especially indignant at the manner in which its members had not been consulted. Ironically, many of the workers actually understood the reasoning behind the employers' decision, but their main qualm was that the District Committee had taken a decision affecting them without consultation. The employers attempted to placate the engineering workers by extending the period over which the money would be paid back to twelve weeks. The workers refused to be mollified and, on October 5th, a number of yards came out on strike.[255] The strike was markedly different in that it was one of the first anti-official strikes of the war. Meaning that the majority of the strikers were not particularly vehement in opposition to their employers but felt considerable ire towards the union officials who, they felt, had betrayed their trust and responsibilities to grass roots members. Within a week there were estimated to be up to 18,000 men on strike in the area and a proposal put forward at a meeting in North Shields for a return to work pending and independent inquiry had been rejected. The

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[254] *Ibid*, p 182.
[255] *Ibid.*

opposition to the strikers from both union leadership and the BCP remained strong. Faced with such determined opposition from every official body that could have been expected to support the strike the action was inevitably short-lived and a meeting of the Central Strike Committee at Wallsend Town Hall on October 12th decided by 75 votes to 22 to back a return to work. Two days later the strikers had all returned to work.[256] The strike, whilst officially achieving little, was significant in that it demonstrated the abilities of Tyneside workers once again to organise themselves unofficially. Furthermore, it showed that there was sufficient militancy and unity amongst the Tyneside workforce to fly in the face of criticism from official representative bodies when they believed that their views were not being considered.

As the war continued the unrest in the local shipbuilding industry continued to grow. In common with the national experience 1944 proved to be the worst year with stoppages amongst the boilermakers at Vickers-Armstrongs Naval Yard at Walker, amongst others, capturing headlines both locally and nationally. This stoppage, in September, concerned the manning of newly installed gas cutting machines and resulted in an official inquiry chaired by Sir John Forster.[257] This inquiry reported that there was no defensible reason for the strike action and the men's refusal to return to work was delaying vital production.[258] As a result, 125 of the men were found guilty of taking part in an illegal strike and were fined £10 each with an additional 10s in costs (a total, per man, of approximately £420 today).[259] The men insisted, through their solicitor, that their actions were correct and that they would refuse to pay any fine levied by the court. The Chairman of the bench took a very dim view of this

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[256] Croucher, R, *Engineers*, pp 184-187.
[257] TWAS: 895/10. Tyne Shipbuilders Association, minute book, December 21st 1944, p 320.
[258] *The Times*, December 21st 1944, p 4.
[259] *The Times*, January 8th 1945, p 2.

strike and stated that it would be "impossible to exaggerate the seriousness of the offence." No mitigating factors could be found for the men's actions.[260]

The shipbuilding industry, combined with the engineers and steel producers, formed the most actively militant section of British society throughout the war. This increase in militancy is notable during the war and "in both the proportion of disputes and workers involved, the Metal, Engineering, and Shipbuilding industries experienced the greatest percentage increase".[261] This field of industry was the only one to experience a greater average number of disputes during the first three years of war than it had in the previous eleven years of peace. Between the years 1927 and 1938 the shipbuilding, engineering, and steel production industries had been responsible for 17.1% of all industrial disputes but during the first three years of the war this total had increased to 30.9%. In terms of the percentage of the total working days lost the figure had more than quadrupled from 7% to 32.2%.[262] The only category of industry responsible for a greater percentage of days lost was mining.

Throughout the war there were continual and vociferous complaints that the shipyard workers on Tyneside were not working to their utmost capacity and that slackness was commonplace in the industry. Allegations made against shipyard workers included the case of six workers who had been found fishing in the river from a partially completed vessel whilst they were meant to be working. It was also said to be common practice amongst the woodworkers in the yards to make toys at Christmas. The manufacturing of petrol lighters was also commonplace.[263] There were also largely unsubstantiated allegations that woodworkers, who had been

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[260] *Ibid.*
[261] Gromberg, E L, 'Strikes and Lock-Outs of Great Britain', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 59, 1 (November 1944), p 100.
[262] *Ibid*, p 101.
[263] NA: ADM1/15260. Summary of Statements made to the Financial Secretary of the Admiralty about Misuse of Shipyard Labour on Tyneside, July 1943, p 2.

employed by Swan Hunter's after working at Wallsend Dock, had stated that they had done no work for several weeks. No evidence was produced to the inquiry to support this accusation.[264] These claims were of course part of an attempt by local councils to encourage the Admiralty to approve the re-opening of several local yards that had been closed in the previous decades and the inquiry had been appointed to investigate allegations that labour was being wasted in the industry.

The shipyard workers, however, were still capable of showing a high level of dedication to the war effort and were most strongly influenced by events at sea. There was, for example, a noticeable increase in productivity in the yards after the loss of the battleships *HMS Repulse* and *HMS Prince of Wales* was made public.[265] The loss was met with consternation, "especially as the residents of Tyneside recognised the value of such ships."[266] The increased determination of the shipyard workers was put down to their realisation of how important their work actually was to the national effort. There is also evidence that large numbers of workers believed that overly controlling bureaucracy was responsible for stalling their ability to contribute more fully to the war effort. This opinion crystallised around the issue of the re-opening of yards closed during the previous decade, including Jarrow, and a commonly expressed opinion by former and current shipyard workers was that the government should "let them get on with the job."[267] This would seem to imply that the workers were often unified behind the wartime requirements of the country but that they grew anxious and irritated by what they saw as governmental interference in an industry in which they knew best.

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[264] *Ibid.*
[265] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle City Police, December 19th 1941.
[266] *Ibid.*
[267] NA: ADM1/15260. Minutes of a Meeting between the Financial Secretary and a Deputation from Jarrow, May 18th 1943.

Due to the preponderance of heavy industry on Tyneside, along with the traditionally masculine views of such a society, the working opportunities for women have often been viewed as extremely limited. A report inquiring into the social and industrial culture of Tyneside would seem to have found some justification for this viewpoint as it pinpointed the "scarcity of industrial employment for women."[268] Despite this, the report goes on to state that the proportion of women employed in the area was greater than that in other parts of the North of England. Most of these women were employed in distributive trades, along with summer employment of women in the catering trades and hotels found in the area's seaside resorts.

Despite this rather gloomy view it is obvious that the situation had been changing in the decade before the declaration of war and that the resurgence of the heavy industries caused by the wartime situation had merely drawn the focus of attention away from these developments. This is reflected in the fact that whilst the numbers employed in coal mining and shipbuilding fell by between 20% and 30% the numbers involved in the consumption goods and service sector "increased rapidly in the twenties but remained fairly stationary after 1935."[269] This slowdown coincided with the process of re-armament and the subsequent resurgence of the heavy industries. New and existing industries had created an estimated 10,000 new jobs in the pre-war decade, with over half of the positions being filled by women. Much of this progress was due to the developments on the Team Valley Industrial Estate in Gateshead where more than 100 firms had been tempted to establish themselves by financial inducements from the Commissioner of the Special Areas. Together these new developments, largely in the clothing and food industries, employed

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[268] NA: BT64/3260. Report on Tyneside by Professor Allen, 1944, p 1.
[269] *Ibid*, p 3.

approximately 5,000 people, over 60% of them young women.[270] Increased demand for the products of the traditional heavy industries of Tyneside also led to new opportunities for women. The numbers of those employed in industries such as shipbuilding and engineering increased throughout the war although, they remained a very small percentage of the total workforce in these fields. The situation was improving with, for example, a total of 268 women being employed by nine separate North East shipbuilding companies by late 1942.[271] Thus, it can be seen that the creation of work that came with the war resulted in an increase in workplace opportunities for women, often in areas for which they had long been considered unsuitable. By the spring of 1941 local intelligence reports were able to make the comment that the rising levels of female employment in local industries were "significant" and this trend continued so that, by later that summer, local sources were proclaiming that "large numbers of women are now employed in industry."[272]

Despite the view of Tyneside as an area dominated by traditional heavy industries such as coal mining, shipbuilding, engineering, and munitions work, the city of Newcastle upon Tyne presented a different role. As a regional capital and hub of trade, the city had always possessed a significant service sector based largely around the distributive and commercial sector. It was these industries that, together with domestic service, employed the majority of the female working population of the area. Indeed, by 1931, the retail sector was estimated to employ approximately 9,000 women in Newcastle.[273] Whilst the heavy industries had been in decline during the 1930's the service sector had maintained its capacity and in many cases had expanded

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[270] *Ibid.*
[271] TWAS: 978/8. North East Coast Shiprepairers Association minutes, October 6th 1942, p 364.
[272] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports – Newcastle upon Tyne City Police, March 29th 1941 and July 4th 1941.
[273] Vall, N, 'The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy in Newcastle 1914-2000' in Colls, R & Lancaster, B (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne*, p 62.

significantly. The war led to the stalling of this process at the expense of a temporary and disproportionate boom in the heavy industries.

Given the levels of employment in thirsty trades, such as the heavy manufacturing industry, on Tyneside, combined with the number of local breweries, it is no wonder that the licensed trade played a significant role in the Tyneside service economy. Whilst Tyneside also contained an important brewing industry the role of landlords and publicans was somewhat different given their close contact with the local communities that they served. Indeed, it has been argued that if "the breweries were the prime suppliers of liquid morale during the war, the front-line troops in keeping everyone's chins up were the men and women running the pubs of Britain."[274] Roles changed for publicans during the war. Not only were they still expected to play the part of the convivial host, often when faced with shortages and staff problems, but they were also expected to act as lookouts for signs of poor morale, to provide encouragement, to aid the war effort through the running of charity funds, and to build close relationships with the armed forces in their area.[275] The public houses of Tyneside also formed key nodes in their local communities. This was especially important in the working-class areas that sustained the majority of the heavy industries. Fluctuating shift patterns, combined with increased wages and the general austerity of wartime Tyneside, resulted in the public house being seen as an ever more important entertainment venue. There was an upsurge in the customer base of most pubs as younger people began to earn more money during the war and servicemen were increasingly based in the region. There were, however, problems that went hand-in-hand with the growing popularity of the public house.

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[274] Glover, B, *Brewing for Victory. Brewers, Beer and Pubs in World War II* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1995), p 67.
[275] See *Ibid*, pp 67-84.

Drunkenness had decreased nationally throughout the inter-war years, yet Newcastle and Tyneside remained one of the areas where the rate was significantly higher than the national average. Indeed, Newcastle continued to be in the "top five of the drunkenness table and comparatively its problem was getting worse".[276] It has been stated that the rate of drunkenness, measured by the simple expedient of the number of arrests per head of population, for Newcastle throughout the 1930's and up to the outbreak of war was 40 per 10,000 head of population, and a claim has been made that this represented two and a half times the national rate.[277] In fact, the rate could have been even higher as the figures available from the Licensing Statistics (England and Wales), indicate that, in 1938, the national average was just 11.33 per 10,000.[278] If this is the case then Newcastle's figures were in fact more than three and a half times greater than the national average.

It was argued that the wartime situation on Tyneside had led to a "more responsible attitude" towards alcohol consumption, with prosecutions per annum decreasing from over 1,000 during the late 1930's to just 257 in 1946.[279] This, however, does not tell the whole story. Police intelligence reports for the period suggest that the consumption of alcohol on Tyneside was prone to peaks and troughs. The subject is first mentioned in a report on January 4th 1941 when it is stated that drunkenness, although showing an overall "substantial decrease", was still "rather prevalent". Eighteen people were charged with this offence in Newcastle over the New Year period.[280] The drinking habits of the Tyneside public continued to be affected by seasonal changes with the long nights of spring and summer seeing the heaviest consumption rates and a subsequent increase in arrests for drunkenness. In

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[276] Bennison, B, 'Drink in Newcastle', in Colls, R & Lancaster, B (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne*, p 185.
[277] *Ibid.*
[278] TWAS: AS/BA/6/3. Annual Report of the North East Brewers Association, 1940, p 6.
[279] *Ibid.*
[280] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle City Police, January 4th 1941.

1941 the arrest rate for the six months up until the end of June showed an increase of 12% from the six months previous.[281] This is explainable as a reaction to the wartime conditions. During the winter nights the earlier blackout created problems for people travelling even short distances whilst public transport was also more unreliable at this time of the year.

Later police reports on the subject appear confused, stating that although consumption had increased there had been little discernible rise in incidences of drunkenness but also that prosecutions for the offence had increased by 28% on 1940 figures and 11% on those from 1939.[282] From this it would appear that the first full year of war, which was also the period when the country was at most risk from invasion and bombing, saw a significant fall in drunkenness but that as the situation became less threatening the figures began to slowly creep up again although the comparative weakness of wartime beer and the shortages that particularly afflicted Tyneside meant that levels never reached the levels of the mid-1930's. The lack of reports where drink is mentioned later in the war would seem to suggest that the problem was easily controlled and that people had settled into a wartime rhythm. Although the public houses continued to receive extensive patronage it would appear that drunkenness continued to decline during the latter period of the war with even the VE Day celebrations in Newcastle being described as "comparatively quiet".[283] A common official response to increasing levels of alcohol consumption was to increase the price of beverages and this was done several times during the war to subsequent good effect.

As a corollary of increased sobriety the problems affecting the owners of public houses and inns quickly became clear at the onset of war. If people were

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[281] *Ibid*, report dated July 18th 1941.
[282] *Ibid*, report dated January 30th 1942.
[283] *Ibid*, report dated May 15th 1945.

consuming less alcohol immediately after the outbreak of war then this would be felt economically by the pub owners and breweries, as the immediate impact of the declaration of war began to wear off, however, the customers began to return and increasing prices resulted in greater profits. Many of the pub owners had expected to come under attack once more from the tee-totaller's party and temperance movement. They were not, in the first year of the war, disappointed. Concerted attempts were made to bring back the draconian legislation that had been in place during the First World War and concerns were raised in the national press by high placed supporters of the temperance movement regarding the threat to the war effort that alcohol consumption supposedly represented. The government however took the view that beer consumption was good for public morale and realised that restrictions on consumption and availability may have led to subsequent industrial unrest.[284]

The Licensed Trade Employer's Association appeared to be late in preparing for the war with a circular regarding ARP measures being distributed to members only on March 22nd of 1939. Despite these precautions it would seem that the main concern voiced in the circular concerned the possible disruption to supplies that could result from air raids and the possibility of greater regulation of dray deliveries in the Tyneside area.[285] Complacent attitudes towards ARP resulted in several pub owners falling foul of blackout regulations early in the war.

The more general wartime problems, as represented by the blackout, instigated significant problems in the licensed trade. The conditions of the blackout forced many local authorities to curtail late night tram and bus services and this had a knock-on effect on the licensed trade. In December 1939 both Newcastle City Council and

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[284] For a fuller description of the battle between the temperance movement and the breweries and licensed trade during the period see Glover, B, *Brewing for Victory* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1995), pp 1-17.

[285] TWAS: EM/LT/1/1. Licensed Trade Employer's Association (Minute Book), records of general meeting, March 29th 1939.

Tynemouth Borough Council wrote to the Association stating that services would cease at 10 pm due to the restrictions on street lighting. This resulted in a succession of meetings to discuss the possible responses to this predicament. Proposals included the early opening and closing of pubs but this was impractical because in order to open early would require the permission of the Brewery Sessions whilst early closing was disagreeable because it would mean that public houses would lose custom to clubs who did not close early.[286] Despite these concerns, most breweries decided to have their pubs stop serving at 9.30 pm so that both customers and staff could avail themselves of transport home.

Some breweries, including Calders in Newcastle, refused to close their pubs early; whilst others, such as the representatives of Messrs Rowells, voiced the suspicion that an official curfew would be put into place in any regard ensuring the early closing of all businesses.[287] Some of the other suggestions by members of the Association showed a distinct lack of understanding of their workforces needs and included a scheme whereby staff would be redistributed so that they could work closer to their homes and a plan to force 50% of staff to stay overnight at their place of employment on alternating nights. Obviously these schemes were dismissed by the majority as unworkable. Some recognition, however, of the increased dangers faced by their staff during wartime was evident in the early wartime increase in wages. From January 1st 1940 all employees working in industrial areas alongside the Tyne were to receive a pay rise of not less than 2/6 per week (approximately £5 today) whilst others would receive a more limited rise of at least 2/- per week (or approximately £4 today). In addition to this a minimum wage was set at 45/- (or approximately £90 today), plus the increase, for barmen and 30/- (or approximately

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[286] *Ibid*, minutes of general meeting on September 23rd 1940.
[287] *Ibid*.

£60 today), plus increase, for barmaids.[288] In this manner the licensed trade hoped to stop the flow of workers that it had suffered leaving to join the armed forces and ARP organisations.

Perhaps the greatest problem to face the licensed trade on wartime Tyneside was the shortage of beer that occurred persistently from the summer of 1941 onwards. As previously mentioned the matter was discussed by representatives of the local authorities, the Licensing Justices, the local Police, the Northumberland and Durham Brewers Association and the Licensed Trade Employer's Association. The earliest recorded meeting of the latter two organisations to discuss this problem happened in early August 1941. At this conference the causes of the problem were discussed and it was agreed that the two key areas were transportation problems that were placing greater demand on local breweries and the "heavily increased" public demand for beer.[289] The two associations agreed that their foremost duty was to the members of the public and "particularly to working men whose hours for leaving work must be specially considered."[290] Again this was a reflection of the government's fear that shortages of beer could lead to an increase in incidences of industrial unrest. The shortages had led to some pubs closing their doors early or, in some cases, not opening at all for several consecutive days. This not only deprived workers and regular customers but could also lead to congestion at licensed premises that did have a supply of beer.

The continuing crisis led to a later meeting between the Licensing Justice, the Police and representatives of the Board of Trade in May 1942. Several complaints had been received from workmen who claimed that they could not obtain refreshment

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[288] Annual meeting on December 15th 1939, in *ibid.*
[289] TWAS: EM/LT/1/1. Licensed Trade Employer's Association minute book, joint meeting of the Northumberland & Durham Brewers Association and the Licensed Trade Employer's Association, August 6th 1941.
[290] *Ibid.*

after their shifts had finished due to pub closures and early closures. They went on further to claim that they were being forced to visit several premises before being able to get served and that this was a cause of great irritation. It would seem that some publicans, and indeed their staff, were taking advantage of the situation by selling what limited stocks they had quickly and then closing to take the rest of the day off. The police voiced their disapproval of this practice and petitioned the owning breweries to take stern measures against any publican caught doing this.[291] Whilst the breweries largely accepted these accusations they put the blame on individual managers and on new wartime staff who were inexperienced in their duties. Little headway was made at the meeting and it was expressed that hopefully the upcoming budget might help to reduce the demand for beer, especially in the coal mining areas of the district.[292]

The problem of publicans closing their premises early after selling all their stock continued to be a major problem on Tyneside and it would seem that brewers and licensed trade workers were becoming increasingly resentful of accusations against them. This can be seen in the response to a letter from the Newcastle Trades Council submitted in 1944. This letter stated, "That this Council takes a serious view of the loss of rights suffered by the public by the premature closing of licensed premises, in that it appears that these premises are cleared at the will of the tenants and occupiers, who ignore the terms of their license."[293] The response once again was to blame this on inexperienced staff and to hostilely state that the situation of Newcastle was no worse than that in neighbouring towns where "no fuss" was being made. The local press were also blamed for inciting the public feelings on the issue.

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[291] *Ibid*, details of a conference between the Licensing Justices, the Police and the Board of Trade on May 15th 1942.
[292] *Ibid.*
[293] Letter from Newcastle Trades Council, August 30th 1944, in *ibid.*

An attempt was even made to blame the situation on the general public and it was claimed that, if there was a shortage, it was largely "due to the greed of certain customers who drank far more than their share, also more people were drinking today".[294] It was in attitudes such as these that some of the management community of Tyneside unwittingly aided in maintaining traditional class and regional disputes, despite the supposedly unifying influence of the war.

Food rationing enforced by the government impacted, not only on the food retail sector and the customer, but also, on the butchery trade. Shortages of meat and the implementation of coupons meant that those in this trade faced several new challenges brought about by the war. The centralisation of slaughter houses, just three such establishments were meant to cater for the majority of the North East, resulted in supplies of meat on Tyneside running short. The members of the Newcastle, Gateshead and district Butchers' Association vehemently criticised this measure and claimed that the scheme would be unworkable. A deputation was sent to protest to the Ministry of Food and the policy was decried as a recipe for disaster that would "make no end of confusion."[295]

Early in the war however the main complaint seems to not have been regarding quantity but quality of meat provided by butchers as there were several complaints that meat supplied was of a poor grade.[296] One of the most common complaints concerned the profiteering of butchers around the Christmas period when the prices of turkeys and other fowl tended to increase. There were several complaints about this matter from members of the general public and the Association promised to hold a full internal inquiry with punishment for any member who was

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[294] Reply from Mr James Deuchar to letter from Newcastle Trades Council, August 30th 1944, in *ibid.*
[295] TWAS: TU/BA/1/1. Newcastle, Gateshead and District Butchers' Association, minute book, special committee, September 11th 1939, pp 371-372.
[296] *Ibid*, May 27th 1940, p 399.

found to be profiteering.[297] During the Christmas of 1940 the level of complaints regarding this matter reached such a level that they were included in the police intelligence reports, it was said that people believed the prices to be "exorbitant".[298] The problem, despite the promises of the Association, was obviously not completely solved as there were once more complaints in December 1943 that poultry was both scarce and expensively priced.[299]

Although it can be argued, as indeed Churchill did, that during a Total War all workers are on the front lines, the merchant seamen of Tyneside appear to have suffered more from enemy action than most. Although figures are difficult to calculate, the Merchant Navy lost in total some 45,313 casualties. It is probable that these men suffered some of the greatest numbers of casualties in comparison to their numbers. The Tyne-based Moor Line Company , for example, lost 257 men killed (a further 27 were interned in Sweden) from its thirteen ships sunk during the war.[300] From the very beginning of the war the heavy and sustained enemy attacks on east coast shipping resulted in the merchant crews, many of whom were Tyneside residents, experiencing great difficulties in the performance of their, already arduous, duties.[301] There are no exact figures that provide an accurate breakdown of the ratio of Tyneside men manning these ships but the anecdotal evidence suggests that the numbers were substantial. For example, many of the crews manning the vessels of convoy CW9, during July 1940, were described as being "Geordies from the Tyne".[302] The area experienced greater casualties lost in merchant vessels during the war than any other comparative area. Concerns over the "losses among local crews"

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[297] *Ibid*, November 6th 1940, p 412.
[298] TWAS: MD/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle City Police, January 4th 1941.
[299] *Ibid*, December 30th 1943.
[300] TWAS: DX1054/1. Moor Line, Book of Remembrance, 1939-1945. See Appendix C for details of vessels lost by this company.
[301] TWAS: 1070/21. North of England Shipowners' Association, annual reports, 1939, p 11.
[302] Slader, J, *The Fourth Service. Merchantmen at War 1939-45* (London: New Guild, 1995), p 32.

were being expressed by large numbers of the Tyneside public throughout 1942.[303] The amount, and frequency, of losses of local men was also "a matter of great concern" to the North of England Shipowners' Association.[304]

Merchant seamen, at home on leave, represented over 1% of all losses during air raids on Tyneside suggesting that there were substantial numbers of men in this service. Even an unscientific calculation, using the proportion of Merchant Navy sailors killed in air raids as a basis, for the total numbers in the service would indicate that there were at least 10,000 men from Tyneside in the Merchant Service (and this is a conservative estimate). It would appear, from this evidence, that the men of Tyneside made up a larger than average proportion of the merchant crews aboard British vessels. The importance of this industry on Tyneside cannot be overstated. Indeed, so important was merchant service to the area that the national union of seamen was centred on South Shields. The topic would certainly benefit from dedicated study. The Seaman's Union's primary founder, Havelock Wilson, was the former MP for Middlesbrough. In an effort to partially alleviate the plight of the seamen a policy known as the Seafarers' War Risk Money scheme was introduced that would give an additional £5 (£200) for officers and ratings alongside £2.10s.0d for boys (£100).

The dangers applied to all mariners of course, not only those who ventured out to sea, including those who manned the tug boats on the river. The response of the tug boatmen to the increasing levels of danger was to demand increases in fees. The first such increase, of between 16%-20%, was agreed in November 1939 and there were further increases throughout the war.[305]

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[303] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, July 17th 1942.
[304] TWAS: 1070/22. North of England Shipowners' Association, annual report, 1941, p 6.
[305] TWAS: 1070/21. North of England Shipowners' Association, annual reports, 1939, p 15.

During the invasion scares of 1940 and 1941 some workers would have found themselves on the frontlines with a quasi-military role to play in the defence of Tyneside. It was thought that the enemy may have attempted to land troops on the Tyne by seaplane and it would have fallen to the Tug-boatmen of Tyneside companies, Francis Fenwick, Lawson Batey, and Redheads, to have used their, largely unarmed, vessels to ram and sink the seaplanes as they landed. In addition to this they were expected to use their vessels to impede river traffic and to render possible berthing points unusable.[306]

Managing the War Effort

The persistent strike action that affected the dockyards of Tyneside provided a stern test of local management bodies and eventually attracted the attention of the national government. Despite the best efforts of the regional bodies that were set up to arbitrate disputes in this sector it had become obvious by the spring of 1942 that the men themselves distrusted these organisations and preferred to take unilateral strike action without reference to official bodies or indeed their own union. After the 1942 strike of more than 100 dockers at Tait and Son in Newcastle the Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin, commissioned an official inquiry into the frequent stoppages that had affected the port. The remit of the inquiry was made clear in that it was to focus on wider issues, and officially "To inquire into the causes and circumstances of

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[306] Information kindly provided by Mr David Waller, host of the Auxiliary Units website, [http://www.btinternet.com/~david.waller/index.html], originally quoted from *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 23rd April 1968, page number unknown.

successive stoppages of work of port transport workers on the river Tyne, and to make recommendations for the avoidance of such interruptions of work in the future."[307]

The inquiry was held in the Regional Headquarters of the Ministry of Labour at 28 Great North Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, from June 22nd 1942-June 24th. A wide range of representatives was heard from including those who spoke for the port authorities, relevant businesses, the union concerned, and the workers.[308] The employers and the port authorities seem to have presented a relatively united front by claiming that the main causes of the strike were distrust between the men and their union and also that there was difficulty in interpreting the various pay rates especially with regard to the 'Lieu Rate'. The National Joint Council for Dock Labour claimed that a major problem was that the Tyneside workers had drifted away from the National Agreement of May 1920.[309] The employers attempted to portray themselves as being concerned only for the war effort with Mr B Elliott Common, the Regional Port Controller, stressing the necessity of maintaining a quick turn-around of vessels in the port.[310] Mr Elliott Common was an interested party in more than his official role as he was also a director of Common Bros Steamship Company and as such, surely, had a vested interest in the matter.

As has been referred to previously the official report cited one of the main causes of stoppages to be the lack of trust that the men had in the established negotiating procedures. The report did not fail to implicate the employers as being partially responsible for this breakdown in confidence stating that the employers in

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[307] NA: LAB 10/208. Official Report to the Right Honourable Ernest Bevin MP, Minister of Labour, into the problems surrounding dock workers on the Tyne, June 1942, p 1.
[308] *Ibid.*
[309] *Ibid*, p 2.
[310] *Ibid*, p 1.

the industry could have displayed "a greater sense of their collective responsibility" and by blaming them for the sometimes lax application of previous agreements.[311]

The North East Council of Port Labour however, placed the blame for the deteriorating situation firmly at the feet of the local union leadership. It claimed that weak leadership was the second largest cause of stoppages and that the failures of the local branch leaders had contributed to the worsening relationship between employers and employees. To reinforce these claims, the Council gave the example of the 'green book' agreement of 1923 in which it was stated that no strike action would be taken pending negotiations. This agreement was also backed up by clause eight of the War Emergency Agreement of June 24th 1940. Faced with this barrage of blame the union could do little but admit that the claims were true and reiterate that, as a national body, it condemned the strikes that had occurred in the region.[312]

The employers' claim that the lieu rate of 23/- (£46 today) was unofficial was not as readily accepted by either the union or the committee itself. This argument was contradicted by past experience on the Tyne and by the results of previous legal consultations.[313] There was no doubt that the lieu rate was legal, but it was too widely utilised by the employers. The employers no doubt wished to utilise the national 'fall back rate', which was just over 14/- (approximately £28 today), but this was rejected and a compromise eventually reached when an acceptable piece rate was offered for all general cargo, including munitions.[314]

Local management, both at governmental and industrial levels, remained concerned that new industry should be stimulated by the increased demand caused by the wartime conditions. In Jarrow a deputation was sent to the Admiralty in order to

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[311] *Ibid*, p 3.
[312] *Ibid*, p 5.
[313] *Ibid.*
[314] *Ibid*, pp 7-8.

attempt to persuade the government to re-open the Palmers shipyard that had closed, with devastating consequences for the town, in the 1930's. It is clear from the proposal put forward by the Mayor of Jarrow that the local council was aware that, even in time of national need, regional competition remained strong. To attempt to subvert expected protests from other local shipbuilders it was put forward that the yard should be re-opened by the Admiralty directly and run as a naval yard.[315]

Indeed, once it had become public knowledge that a deputation from Jarrow had been seen by the Admiralty, the Town Clerk of Tynemouth County Borough Council, Mr F G Egner, contacted the Admiralty stating that if there was an inquiry it was hoped that it would also consider the possibility of re-opening the Northumberland Yard at Howdon, this request was supported by the neighbouring authority of Wallsend.[316] The main problem surrounding the re-opening of Palmers, and indeed other yards in the North East, remained the shortage of available manpower, the Admiralty estimated that "On the Tyne we could use at least a thousand more men."[317] The claim that labour shortages were a problem on the Tyne is reinforced by the report in 1941 that Wallsend Slipway was suffering from a lack of available labour and that this had led to delays in production.[318]

When questioned by the Financial Secretary of the Admiralty the deputation from Jarrow could do little but give vague re-assurances that through informal conversations they had come to the opinion that labour was available in the area, a view supported by the local MP, Ellen Wilkinson. They then contradict their own argument by suggesting that "all local firms [could be] made to give up a percentage

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[315] NA: ADM1/152260. Minutes of a Meeting between the Financial Secretary and a Deputation from Jarrow, May 18th 1943.
[316] Letter from Town Clerk of Tynemouth CBC, 26th May 1943, in *ibid.*
[317] NA: ADM1/152260. Minutes of a Meeting between the Financial Secretary and a Deputation from Jarrow, May 18th 1943.
[318] TWAS: DS/SWH/1/7. Swan Hunters minute book, Board meeting, September 2nd 1941, p 27.

of their men [to the newly re-opened yard]", it is claimed that this would not adversely affect the donating firms capacity to carry out their existing work.[319] The questions posed regarding availability of labour at the meeting led to the Jarrow deputation making serious allegations that in many local shipyards "it was quite clear that Labour was being wasted."[320] Despite the seriousness of the allegations being made little or no direct evidence beyond hearsay was given to the Secretary yet it was agreed that there should be an official inquiry into the matter. The local authorities in Tynemouth and Wallsend pounced upon the allegation that labour was available in Jarrow to make the suggestion that, considering a recently re-opened shipyard on the north bank of the Tyne was still 50% below strength, this labour should be transferred.[321] The Ministry of Labour declared that whilst there was no shortage of unskilled labour the shortages of skilled shipyard labour would prevent the re-opening of the Palmers Yard. However, a small yard producing pre-fabricated modules or landing craft would probably be viable in Jarrow.[322]

The Regional Officer of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, Mr St. John Wilson, wrote to inform his Minister that there were many reasons for workers in the yards appearing, to the uninformed observer, to be idle, when in fact they were prevented from activity by necessity of work.[323] Despite these assurance the inquiry, which was to be on an informal and private basis, led by Mr Hall, the Financial Secretary of the Admiralty, into the availability and use of shipyard labour on Tyneside went ahead between the 6th and the 8th of July. The report heard representations from local authorities, shipyard owners' organisations and from

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[319] NA: ADM1/152260. Minutes of a Meeting between the Financial Secretary and a Deputation from Jarrow, May 18th 1943.
[320] Quote from Councillor Richardson in *ibid.*
[321] Letter from Tynemouth CBC, June 12th 1943, in *ibid.*
[322] Letter from Ministry of Labour and National Service to the Admiralty, June 22nd 1943, in *ibid.*
[323] Report of the Regional Officer of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, May 29th 1943, in *ibid.*

representative union officials. It becomes clear that many of the complaints from the local authorities were unsubstantiated or could be explained by the shifting patterns of work within the industry and by the restrictions placed upon work by the dilution of yards with an increasing proportion of unskilled labour.[324] Indeed a statement made to the inquiry that Smith's Dock could afford to spare 200 men was proven to be false by the fact that, just months earlier, two docks had been temporarily unused because of labour shortages.[325]

The shipyard employers came in for criticism. It was claimed that it was wholly the attitude of the employers which prevented the release of enough labour to open a new yard. There were also vague allegations of management using labour on private contracts. One yard manager was accused of using joiners to erect trellises at his home whilst in another case skilled men were employed putting railings around shelters, work which could have been done by labourers.[326] Employers were also using the Essential Workers Order to hold on to men even when they were not immediately required. This was seen as good business practice as shortages could be hard to replace and would lead to a lack of profitability if large orders were forthcoming. Employer – trade union relations were also criticised in the report and it was said that the employers did not consult with the unions on a regular basis with regard to how the available labour should be deployed in local yards although the employers protested that this was not the case and that consultations were frequent.[327] Once again this highlights the ideological differences between employers and local Trade Union officials, ironically this was at a time when most management consultative exercises with the unions were frowned upon by many of the rank-and-

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[324] NA: ADM1/152260. Summary of Statements made to the Financial Secretary of the Admiralty about Misuse of Shipyard Labour on Tyneside, July 1943, p 1.
[325] *Ibid*, p 2.
[326] *Ibid*, p 5.
[327] *Ibid*, p 4.

file union membership, who categorised such attempts at consultation as the "Gaffer's Committee",[328] because of the unions' perceived complicity in ensuring the smooth running of the wartime industries.

The problems faced by local industrial managers did not wholly revolve around the prickly issues of wartime employee relations. The war introduced new problems and further complicated peacetime inconveniences. Many of the local shipbuilding companies could rely on naval contracts to an extent but most also had yards working on vitally needed merchant shipping. Unfortunately the situations brought about by wartime risks often meant that it was difficult to obtain payment for vessels built during the period, especially when the vessels concerned were built for foreign fleets. At Swan Hunter's significant problems were experienced in securing the full payment for a vessel built for Sarwia Steamships Ltd of Canada, which seems to have been the worst country for this, and the total debt owed on this contract stood, in May 1941, at £175,523 (£7,020,920 today).[329] The money, if it was ever paid in full, was most often paid back in small and infrequent amounts.

Damage caused by enemy bombing, whilst not as bad as had been anticipated, continued to concern the management of Swan Hunter's, and led to further financial complications for the firm. Even minor damage to key locations within a yard could result in a slowing, or even temporary halting, of work on important contracts. Such as when several building were damaged, and a platers' shed destroyed on the night of 9th/10th April 1941. Sometime such damage could lead to a modest restructuring of the infrastructure within a yard and in the above case it was decided to double the size of the machine shop when it was rebuilt, at a significant cost of £32,380 (£1,295,200 today). The management quickly developed a greater degree of adaptability than had

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[328] Croucher, R, *Engineers*, p 155.
[329] TWAS: DS/SWH/1/7. Swan Hunter's & Wigham Richardson, minute book, Board meeting, May 6th 1941, pp 14-18.

been required in the peacetime running of the company. In many cases this was necessary because larger companies subsumed control of smaller concerns which, in peacetime, had their own management structures. In the case of Swan Hunter's the company was running, in addition to its shipyard, a cement works and a plywood factory.

The necessity of providing facilities to wartime staff was also of prime concern to the management and in many cases local companies were ordered to provide better recreational facilities for their enlarged workforces. This was often borne at a significant cost to the parent company such as the estimated £21,000 (£880,000) paid by Swan Hunter's management to provide two canteens, with a combined capacity of over 600 persons in the summer of 1941.[330] Even recruiting enough staff to fulfil contract demand was problematic for local managers and throughout 1941 it would appear that the managers at Swan Hunter's were attempting to recruit as many men as possible with both the repair Department and Wallsend Slipway being short of essential workers during this period.[331]

Local managers had to deal with increasing levels of external and internal security. This was a direct result of the sensitive and important nature of much of the work undertaken by Tyneside engineering concerns. Several of the major companies on Tyneside were designated as 'protected places' by the government and were prone to spot inspections from members of the Intelligence Service, in addition to attempted infiltration attempts to test local security.[332] Added to these factors those factories designated as 'protected places' were ordered against giving out information over the phone and had to take unspecified security measures against attack, not only from

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[330] *Ibid*, report to the Board, July 1941, p 19.
[331] *Ibid*, minutes of board meeting, July 10th 1941, p 20.
[332] TWAS: DS/REY/35. Reyrolles Ltd, minute book and correspondence file. Letter from the War Office, September 10th 1939.

German saboteurs, but from IRA elements,[333] and from internal sabotage by members of their staff. One local factory manufacturing gyroscopic gun-sights, propeller hubs and other equipment for the Ministry of Aircraft Production experienced a fire which was later described by the Intelligence Service as being "most certainly deliberate arson" and further security measures concerning the storage and disposal of inflammable materials were instituted.[334]

Mr Oliver Stanley, MP, stated that "the importance [of the merchant shipping industry] rested not only on their contributions to the economic resources of the country and the volume of skilled employment that they gave, but also to the essential part these services played in our national defences".[335] This vital industry was badly disrupted by the war, not least in the very severe losses inflicted by enemy action. The British shipping fleet operated under a system of government licensing but upon the outbreak of war many ships were requisitioned for government use. At first these vessels were mainly passenger liners required for transportation purposes but late in 1939 was extended to include many deep sea tramp vessels. The official body that represented the ship owners of Tyneside, the North of England Shipowners' Association, disapproved of this measure as it would severely curtail their businesses. A statement of 2nd February 1940 declared that:

> "The members of the North of England Shipowners' Association have carefully considered the policy of His Majesty's government...and view with grave misgivings the intention of extending the requisitioning of Deep Sea Tramp tonnage...They [the members] nevertheless feel that the policy of total requisitioning and subsequent delegation of management will inevitably lead to confusion...The Association is convinced that a much greater degree of efficiency would be achieved if the effective management and chartering of vessels remained in the hands of experienced shipowners..."[336]

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[333] Secret memo from Major Brock of the Intelligence Service to Reyrolles detailing possible IRA attacks on Orange Day, July 7th 1940, in *ibid.*
[334] Secret memo from Major Brock, 7th May 1940, in *ibid.*
[335] TWAS: 1070/21. North of England Shipowners' Association, annual reports, 1939, p 9.
[336] Ibid, pp 5-6.

The loss of requisitioned vessels imposed a burden on the parent company as, whilst compensation was paid at pre-war values, the costs of ordering new ships had risen steadily since the war had begun and would continue to do so, almost doubling by 1941; a problem described as "probably the major one confronting the Industry."[337] Increased levels of governmental control on the merchant fleet also proved to be a hindrance for most Tyneside ship owners as the government was permitted, under the Emergency Powers Defence Act, Defence Regulations (Statutory Rules and Orders, Number 927, 1939), at first through the Admiralty and Board of Trade and then, from October 1939, the Ministry of Shipping to control pilotage and navigation, license ships, control ships in port and to stop vessels in port.[338] In an effort to attract more men to the merchant fleet, and to provide necessary training to counter the dearth of engine room and catering ratings, the South Shield's Marine School was founded early in 1940.

The wartime conditions forced on to the merchant fleets resulted in a large number of losses to the Tyneside companies' fleets. The President of the Association, Lord Walter Runciman, stated that "before the war the Association represented roughly 260 ships. That number has been reduced ...We have been carrying the burden of this war more emphatically and more dramatically than any other branch of industry."[339] The government policy regarding the merchant ship owners was criticised and there appears to have been a great deal of suspicion regarding the motives behind the policy of requisitioning in particular. The Chairman of the Association stating that:

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[337] *Ibid*, p 10.
[338] *Ibid*, p 7.
[339] Notes from annual meeting, in *ibid*, p 21.

> "at the present moment the Ministry of Shipping is busy requisitioning as fast as it can all our ships with the alleged object of furthering the national interest by so doing. Those outside shipping take that to mean that requisitioning is necessary to ensure that this country obtains essential supplies...that, as we know, is not the case. The true reason...is to enable the Government to make spot cash out of British shipping...Again and again, Gentlemen, we are being reminded that great Britain wants nothing out of this war – well, that is just what shipowners are going to get."[340]

This was a harsh criticism of policy towards the industry and would appear to have reflected the views of most members of the Association, although it is possibly influenced by the pro-appeasement leanings of the President. Lord Runciman had been appointed by the British government as an unofficial mediator tasked with finding a peaceful solution to the Sudetenland crisis.[341] As such he had been in Czechoslovakia, prior to the beginning of the war, attempting to prevent hostilities, and later claimed that "if he had the time over he would do the same again."[342] This reflects the level of support for appeasement that was prevalent in the country before the war and perhaps also indicates the reluctance of shipowners to see their businesses put at risk by war.

As the war intensified, the 80 companies in the Association lost 79 vessels from 1939-1940 totalling 271,949 tonnes, the mercantile shipping fleets became a frontline concern and the annual report of the Association declared "The year just ended has demonstrated beyond doubt...and had brought about a fuller realisation of the vital service which the shipping industry renders to the British people. This should augur well for the well-being of the industry after the war."[343] By VE Day the Association had suffered the loss of 387,845 tonnes of shipping. Early wartime events, submarine attacks were "particularly intense on the East Coast",[344] had

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[340] *Ibid.*
[341] Gilbert, M, and Gott, R, *The Appeasers* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), pp 129-131, and pp 372-373.
[342] *Ibid*, pp 21-23.
[343] TWAS: 1070/21. North of England Shipowners' Association, annual reports, 1940, p 5.
[344] *Ibid*, 1939, p 11.

resulted in the collapse of the North East Coast coal trade and had severely restricted the overseas trade. Despite these problems the industry enjoyed good relations with its workers and had experienced no serious industrial dispute for over 28 years.[345] It was reported that at no point through the war had any time been lost in the shipping industry due to industrial unrest.[346]

Throughout the war the management community on Tyneside had to learn to deal with an increasing number of regulations, situations that would never have presented themselves in peacetime and the problems of establishing successful ARP procedures and managing the local workforce effectively. Despite the problems that did occur in the area it would seem that most managers remained committed and professional in their approach to the wartime situation. This can be seen reflected in the relatively smooth functioning of the majority of firms and organisations despite the severe conditions experienced due to enemy action and general wartime problems.

A Cause for Concern?

The strikes that occurred on wartime Tyneside are important on many levels. They include the first wartime strike, the Total Time or Lying-On Time strike of October 1942, to spread over an entire area instead of being limited to an individual company or to a very small geographical location and also serve to demonstrate the regional characterisation of many of the strikers, especially in the engineering and shipbuilding industries, where it would appear that when national union support is unforthcoming the workers on Tyneside were once again capable of organising themselves into unofficial bodies in order to run disputes effectively and without outside support when

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[345] TWAS: 1070/21. North of England Shipowners' Association, annual reports, 1942, p 6.
[346] *Ibid*, 1943, p 2.

necessary. This organisational flexibility is a common factor in the history of Tyneside industrial action with examples in each generation of the workforce from the Nine Hours strike of 1871 to the wartime strikes of 1942 and 1944.[347] Does the existence of these, undoubtedly historically important, strikes on Tyneside, however, allow us to draw the conclusion that the Tyneside industrial worker was more concerned with his own well being, in defending his peacetime working rights and enlarging his wage, than in contributing to what has now become the established view of wartime Britain with every member of the community pulling together to fashion a new national solidarity in the face of Nazism?

Of course union membership expanded: 7,803,000 members by 1945, an increase of 1,750,000 .[348] It would be hard to imagine any other occurrence given the increased number of people in work during the period. However, the majority of national unions at the time were fully supportive of both the war effort and as an extension of this the government, even though this was often at the expense of workers' rights and therefore a direct contradiction of their memberships interests and the functions for which the unions' leaderships were elected.[349] Likewise, after the invasion of Russia, the BCP followed a line supportive of greater production and government industrial policy at the expense of failing to represent the interests of many of its members who were employed in the traditional heavy industries that thrived in the wartime conditions on Tyneside. This meant that the BCP was compelled to enforce the same line as the unions at a time when it could have exploited the workers' antipathy towards the union structure.[350]

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[347] Croucher, R, *Engineers*, p 181.
[348] Pelling, H, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969), p 218.
[349] See Stevens, R, 'Containing Radicalism: The Trades Union Congress Organisation Department and Trades Councils, 1928-1953', *Labour History Review*, 62, 1 (Spring 1997), pp 5-21.
[350] Pelling, H, *British Trade Unionism*, pp 215-216.

So, if we cannot use greater union activity or an expansion of political awareness to explain the growth of workplace dissatisfaction, what was responsible? Rather, it can be better explained by the awareness of their workplace environment that existed within the majority of British workers. Many of these men, it is important to emphasise that, despite employing numbers of women, the majority of strikes occurred in male dominated industries, had extensive experience of the industrial system at action in the workplace and had also heard the accounts of their father's and, possibly grandfathers', experiences in the same, or similar, industries. Such an inherited memory left a sharp awareness of the balance of power within industry and the men were well aware that their power increased when there was a drastic need for greater productivity. The men therefore were merely using an increase in their levels of workplace power in order to further their own interests. However, we must also take into account that fact that there were few or no strikes of any importance in the first two years of the war. This surely allows us to make the assumption that the workforce was, at this period, dedicated to the national war effort and were 'pulling together' with their traditional enemies, the employers. Despite this, such bonhomie, that was experienced in the crisis years of the war soon abated and was replaced by the steady grind of the years 1942-1945. This resulted in a number of attempts by employers to bring in schemes that would degrade the peacetime rights of the workforce and the subsequent increase in industrial militancy amongst the workers. On Tyneside the workforce showed their independence and strength of unity by following industrial action even when opposed by their unions, their employers and by the government. Their ability to organise themselves into an efficient body in order to run a strike action reflects greatly on their determination and intelligence.

The very existence, and number, of strikes that took place on Tyneside throughout the war would seem to contradict the view of some that "[The British] were fighting a war with their sense of humour intact; they were 'good tempered' and modest."[351] Though the strikers may have maintained their 'sense of humour' it is clear that they felt that, whilst they may have been part of a national effort, they had every right to take disruptive industrial action, regardless of the national effort, if their working rights were perceived to have been threatened.

The local authorities on Tyneside were faced with grave problems at the beginning of the war. They were forced to assemble an ARP network with little time, manpower, or monetary resources due to the lax attitude shown by both central and local government in the run up to war. The catastrophe that occurred to the ARP structure at Newcastle upon Tyne resulting in the government inquiry showed that corruption in local government managerial circles could run very deep. Whilst the scandal of a Newcastle City Councillor with too much influence would re-occur after the war the fact that this happened during the worst crisis in the country's history makes the lesson all the more harsh. It would appear that there were many, on both the sides of the workers and the managerial sector, who were quite prepared to use wartime conditions to further their own selfish ends, whether by using their influence to profiteer or by taking illegal strike action as a means of exploiting the national situation. Certainly this was the 'People's War' and as such we should remain aware that the people of Tyneside, whilst on the whole being brave and steadfast, were as susceptible as anyone to self-interest, especially in the context of a larger conflict.

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[351] Rose, S O, *Which People's War. National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Chapter 3

Preparedness for Total War from the Air

Overview of ARP

The possibility of a sustained and effective air attack on Tyneside was one which continually caused concern to both the local and national authorities as the European situation worsened. The area had witnessed limited raiding during the First World War but the experience of nearby coastal towns such as Hartlepool, which had suffered bombardment by the German fleet, had wrought a deep impression. Tyneside was seen as an active "danger spot".[352] This was due largely to the nature of its industrial concerns and its easily identified location near the mouth of a major river. As a major armaments centre with a deep sea port, the area was expected to be a target, even though it was initially beyond the range of the Luftwaffe. Indeed the concerns raised by a council report into the vulnerability of the area led to a further suggestion from Councillor Armstrong that the authority should petition central government in order to secure Newcastle and Tyneside special protection. This suggestion was passed on to the Air Raid Precautions Officer, Chief Constable Crawley of Newcastle City Police.

The overwhelming fear that had dominated military and government thinking throughout the Thirties, in Britain, throughout the whole of Europe, and beyond, was that of the prospect of the mass bombing of the civilian population. This fear was not

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[352] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee: Air Raid Precautions. Report by Chief Constable Crawley of Newcastle City Police regarding the evacuation of the populace and the trench and bomb proof shelter system, April 29th 1938, p 57.

only present in official thinking but also in popular culture from novels such as '*The Gas War of 1940*' to Alexander Korda's cinematic version of H G Wells' opinions in the film '*Things to Come,*'[353] which begins with the destruction of London by successive air raids.[354] Even sober military tacticians, such as Major General J.F.C. Fuller, predicted that even one air raid on London would result in mass panic, pandemonium and the collapse of lawful government. It was believed that "the bomber will always get through"[355] to its target and that the aerial bombardment of civilian populations would be the decisive form of warfare in the future.

The fear of aerial bombing obsessed the British throughout the inter-war period. Certainly, the RAF was aware of the effectiveness of this form of warfare having used it effectively at the end of the First World War. Indeed if the war had gone on until 1919 a plan was in place for an extensive strategic bombing campaign of the German mainland in order to destroy military capability and to erode the morale of the German people. The theory has been advanced that, in Britain, the fear of aerial attack was deliberately encouraged by senior officers within the RAF. The main proponent of this thesis, the historian Correlli Barnett, has attempted to place the blame for the overwhelming fear of air attack on the scaremongering of the RAF which, he claims, were attempting to "make the politicians' flesh creep by claiming that air-power could bomb a nation's industry into rubble and reduce its life to anarchy."[356] In a time of severely limited spending, such as the 1930s, it is possible that the RAF were utilising these scare tactics in order to secure greater levels of funding, although Barnett alleges that the motivation on the part of the RAF, and the

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[353] Miles, *The Gas War of 1940* (London: Scolaris, 1931).*Things to Come*, dir. Menzies, W C (United Kingdom: London Films, 1936).
[354] For a detailed consideration of attitudes towards possible bombing raids see, Smith, M, *Britain and 1940. History, Myth and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp 14-28.
[355] This famous quote came from a speech by Stanley Baldwin, given in the House of Commons on the 10th of November 1932.
[356] Barnett, C, *The Collapse of British Power* (London: Pan, 2002), p 436.

Chief of Air Staff in particular, was simply to increase the standing of the service in relation to the Army and Navy.[357] The forecasts of bombing induced anarchy were in direct contrast with the early campaigns of RAF Bomber Command during the war, when a concerted attempt was made to hit only military targets with the dropping of bombs on the German mainland expressly forbidden. Barnett uses the official history of the air campaign to underpin his thesis.[358] A possible flaw in this argument is that many of the opinions expressed by the official, though controversial, historians of the bomber offensive, Webster and Frankland, have been subsequently disputed by several members of Bomber Command.[359] Throughout the 1930s a glut of commentators mused on the apocalypse that would result from aerial bombing attacks but the opinions formed were based substantially upon fallacious evidence extrapolated from the limited experiences of the country during the First World War.

Taking examples from Britain's experiences of bombing raids from 1916-1918, and the effectiveness of this type of warfare in other, more recent, conflicts, most notably the Spanish Civil War, the British government grossly overestimated the effectiveness of bombing. Both in terms of the social dislocation caused by bombing and in the number of casualties that would be the result of bombing raids, almost from the outset of hostilities, the estimates were to be proven by later experiences to have been vastly over exaggerated.[360] This fear of the consequences of air raids was not solely confined to the upper echelons of government. Mass Observation surveys showed that many people, influenced by popular culture, believed that in the event of another war there would be an aerial holocaust from which few of them could expect

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[357] *Ibid.*
[358] Webster, Sir C, & Frankland, N, *The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany1939-1945* (London: HMSO, 1961).
[359] For one such critique see, Goulding, A G, *Uncommon Valour. The Story of RAF Bomber Command, 1939-45* (Manchester: Goodall, 1996).
[360] Calder, A, *The People's War*, pp 221-22.

to escape untouched. This expectation was even reflected in the attitudes of the ARP workers one of whom stated that "No-one knew just exactly what would be needed of them at the commencement of hostilities and it was fully expected that the whole country could be raided to a very great extent."[361] Government attitudes towards the prospect of mass air raids also trickled downwards into the concerns of the regional authorities who would be ultimately made responsible for the organisation of Air Raid Precautions in their area. Indeed, the over-estimation of the effectiveness of an air raid was something which persisted in some areas until well into the war, as can be seen when considering some of the paper exercises that Air Raid Precautions organisations undertook throughout the war.[362] These local organisers, as did the national forecasters, often exaggerated the effectiveness of prospective air raids and tended to over-estimate the amount of damage that would result.

The British government was quick to recognise that precautions would have to be taken in order to maintain control over the country in the event of air raids. As a result, the Baldwin government had issued a circular to the local authorities entitled 'Air Raid Precautions' as early as 1935. The motivation behind the early air raid precautions, such as the distribution of 38 million gas masks and the digging of trenches in London, has been questioned. The measures are said to have increased the anxiety of the general public at the time of the Munich conference and were possibly used as a means of persuading public opinion to accept further appeasement because "Apprehension took the place of resolution".[363]

The most immediately visible arm of the various ARP services, the Warden Service, was formed two years later. By mid-1938 the organisation had recruited

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[361] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee) minutes, 1939.
[362] TWAS: PA/NC/5/51. Newcastle City Police Wartime Files Re: ARP.
[363] Taylor, A J P, *English History 1914-1945*, pp 427-431.

almost a quarter of a million personnel nationwide. Preparing this new force took time and money. In Newcastle the spending on air raid precautionary measures increased by an average of 68% in 1937-1939 compared to the preceding two years. In 1937 only £55 7s 9d (approximately £2,214 today) was spent compared to £522 19s 6d (£20,918 today) in the next financial year, an increase of over 900%. The majority of the money, apart from that assigned to Police and Fire Brigade pay allowances, went on secretarial costs, furnishings and training courses and demonstrations.[364] The full breakdown of expenditure for the years 1936 to 1939 can be found in appendix A.[365] The two tables highlight the drain on the resources of local authorities caused by the necessity of purchasing even small everyday items of equipment that were needed to ensure the smooth functioning of the ARP services, for example, typewriters. This was despite the official government policy that promised to pay at least 60% of the costs to local authorities.[366] In reality the compensation from central government was slow in coming and was often delayed by red tape.

As a reflection of the level of forethought that had been given to the vulnerability and importance of the area, several additional schemes had been suggested by the city council. The first was a plan to create a zigzag trench system covering all of the available space in the city. This was to be a co-operative scheme whereby each member of the population would be allocated a section of trench and would be responsible for digging out and maintaining this section in the event of a war. The need for a variety of shelters was also envisioned in this report. These were to include shelters in places of work, at home and in areas widely frequented by the general public. As such the local police and fire service were to locate premises that

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[364] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee: Air Raid Precautions. Records of preparations to be put into place with regard to ARP measures in the event of war being declared, p61, May 13th 1938.
[365] Appendix B, tables i and ii.
[366] Thorpe, A, *The Longman Companion to Britain*, pp 114-115.

could be converted into use as shelters and list these for the attention of the City Engineer, Captain Youll.[367]

Under the Civil Defence Act of 1939 and ARP Department circular 91/1939 the local authority was duty bound to provide "domestic shelter (freely) to those who could not be expected to provide for themselves." Although this was limited to areas that were expected to come under sustained attack, including Tyneside. As part of this responsibility the authority had the power to designate any building or part of a building as suitable for either a shelter or an aid post. The property remained in the hands of the previous owner who could appeal against the authority but only on the grounds that the building was required for purposes of public importance or that the building was already in use as a private shelter.[368] Unsurprisingly, very few people did decide to appeal against the local authorities.

It falls here to explain a little about the complicated structure of local government on Tyneside during this period. The City of Newcastle upon Tyne, along with the County Boroughs of Tynemouth, South Shields, and Gateshead, had councils which enjoyed far greater powers than the rest of the area, including their own police forces (which also supervised the other emergency services). Other parts of Tyneside came under the aegis of either Northumberland or Durham County Council and had town councils with strictly limited powers. A Royal Commission had reported shortly before the war on the complicated and muddled nature of local government on Tyneside, making recommendations for changes to boundaries and powers of

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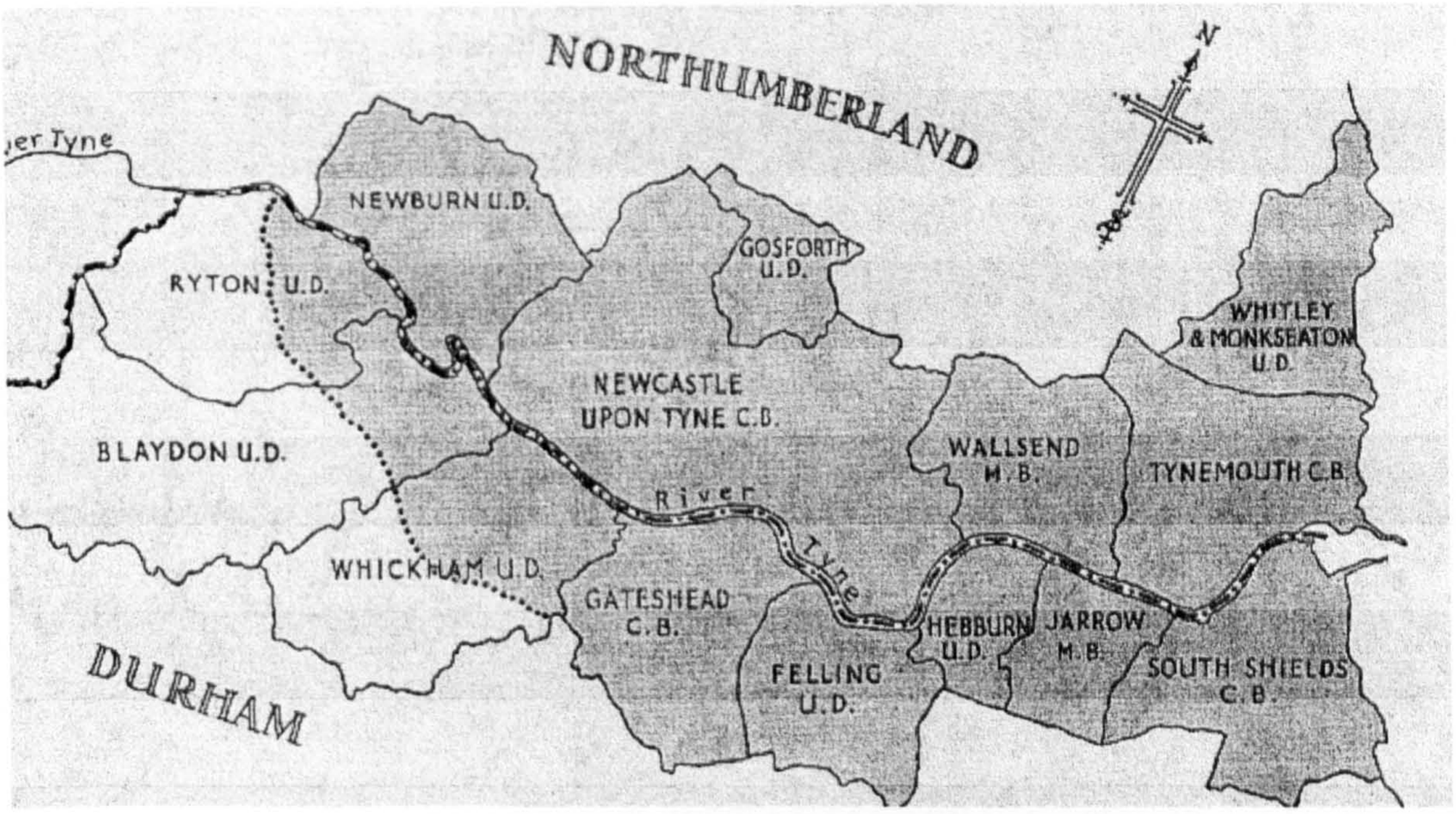
[367] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee: Air Raid Precautions. Report by Chief Constable Crawley of Newcastle City Police regarding the evacuation of the populace and the trench and bomb proof shelter system, April 29th 1938, p 57.

[368] TWAS: PA/NC/4. Newcastle City Police Files: Wartime Arrangements, 1939-1945. Statutory Rules & Regulations as lain down in Home Office memo of August 3rd 1939.

authorities.[369] This was to include the absorption of ten local authorities into one municipal borough based on Newcastle upon Tyne. The primary criticism of the report was that the confusion of local authorities was resulting in inefficiency and that, not only should the Borough Councils be abolished, but that unification of the authorities was urgently required.



Map 3: Map of Tyneside Authorities in 1938. Shaded area is proposed new Municipal Borough of Newcastle upon Tyne.[370]

In Newcastle a search for suitable buildings to use as air raid shelters was underway, overseen by the City Engineer, well before these instructions were relayed from central government. Several locations that could be readily bomb-proofed were noted as suitable for use as deep shelters. The specified locations were the Ouse Burn culvert, the Victoria Tunnel and the Benwell Colliery Tunnel. It was envisaged that

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[369] See NA: HLG 11. Royal Commission on Local Government in the Tyneside Area (Rowlatt and Scott Commission): minutes and papers, 1935-1937. Also, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Local Government in the Tyneside Area*, cmd.5402 (1937).
[370] Goodfellow, D, *Tyneside: The Social Facts* (London: HMSO, 1940), p 94.

after some work these three locations could shelter approximately 10,000 people.[371] Problems occurred when the Home Office refused to sanction the use of the Ouse Burn culvert due to the possibility of overcrowding causing panic during an air raid. A new design was later submitted by the City Engineer and eventually approved, but only after much delay had ensued.[372] The provision of private air raid shelters was somewhat slower. By March 1939 some 1,800 Anderson shelters had been erected in the Newcastle area, over 2,000 had been delivered but the authority was still awaiting delivery of more than 9,000.[373] As preparations for war continued, sandbags were issued to local ARP services by the Home Office. By late October 1938, Newcastle had been issued some 800,000 of these and had placed an order with the Home Office for a further 900,000 for the use of public and private air raid shelters. Air raid sirens were also appearing in larger numbers at this time: Newcastle had ten working sirens by October 21st, and was awaiting delivery of a further two.[374]

The British government feared several outcomes of heavy and sustained raiding. The primary fear was an erosion of public morale caused by losses and damage to homes and families. There was the anxiety about the spread of disease caused by the rupturing of sewer systems, the lack of available health facilities, and the lack of burial facilities for the numerous corpses left in the wake of each raid. The policy regarding the burial of air raid victims posed difficulties for the authorities. The expectation of large numbers of fatalities meant that central, and indeed local, government was forced to "subsume individual burial preferences within wider

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[371] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Report of the City Engineer, June 10th 1938.
[372] *Ibid.* Report on the development of ARP works, April 3rd 1939.
[373] *Ibid.* ARP report, March 31st 1939.
[374] *Ibid.* Report on ARP preparations, October 21st 1938, p 136.

communal imperatives".[375] This was partially offset by an attempt to give civilian deaths "a 'heroic' military rhetoric ... to compensate for a loss of familial control over the destination of the corpse."[376] At Whitley Bay the mortuary services received early practice when the four bodies, two seamen and two Luftwaffe airmen, had been washed onto the shore early in 1940.[377] It was also expected that bombing would result in a large-scale exodus from the major cities and urban areas into the countryside. This expectation continued long into the war in some local authorities. Their beliefs enforced by the experiences of large numbers of the population 'trekking' in towns that had already experienced heavy bombing, from Southampton to Glasgow, as well as in the immediate aftermath of the blitz on Coventry.[378]

The overall structural organisation of the ARP services was laid down largely by Whitehall.[379] There were limited regional variations, despite the fact that there were a number of ad-hoc local arrangements in place just prior to the commencement of hostilities. Directions to local authorities came via a series of memos and advisory letters from the Home Office. These were intended to instruct local authorities on the administration of the national Civil Defence Act of 1939. The act largely dealt with the organisation of services, along with the adequate provision of air raid shelters and gas precautions.[380] Recruitment was a continual problem in some areas; several of the other ARP services for South Shields showed a worrying shortage of manpower. The

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[375] Rugg, J, 'Managing 'Civilian Deaths due to War Operations': Yorkshire Experiences During World War II', *Twentieth Century British History*, 15, 2, (2004), p 154.
[376] *Ibid.*
[377] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee), report of August 28th 1940.
[378] Harrisson, T, *Living through the Blitz* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp 165-166.
[379] NA: HO 186/660. Modification of the basis of organisation and discipline of the ARP Services, 1938-1942, and also, HO 192/1263. ARP Organisation 1941-1942.
[380] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Report on ARP preparations, October 21st 1938, p 136.

area had only 27% of its Auxiliary Fireman contingent and 31% of the estimated number of required messengers in 1938.[381]

Each authority was advised to appoint an ARP Controller who would be responsible for making a wide range of executive decisions in the event of a local or national emergency.[382] A Regional Commissioner was also appointed who would assume overall civil control of the area if it was ever completely cut off from London.[383] In the event, most local authorities gave the duty of ARP Controller to either the mayor of the borough or the chief constable of the local police force, in Newcastle's case Chief Constable Crawley filled this role. The Chief Constable of South Shields was also given the position of ARP Officer by South Shields County Borough Council.[384] However, this centralisation of power was viewed as unhealthy by South Shields County Borough Council and a later meeting decreed that the Chief Constable should only be in charge of police and fire brigade services whilst the other ARP services were transferred to the position of ARP Controller. The Borough Engineer, a MR Reid, was appointed ARP Controller in May 1939.[385] An Emergency Committee, wielding wide-ranging powers over civil defence in the event of an emergency, was also regarded as necessary.[386] In Newcastle this committee consisted of two notable locals from the city council, Alderman Thompson and Councillor Calderwood.[387] Due to the power that could be wielded by these people during an

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[381] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, meeting of April 4th 1938, p 1.
[382] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minute & reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Letter from Lord Privy Seal to the Local Authorities. March 31st 1939.
[383] NA: HO 186/2228. Regional Commissioners: powers under Regulation 29A of Defences (General) Regulations, 1939 to control operations of the ARP Services 1940-1945.
[384] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, meeting of April 4th 1938, p 5.
[385] *Ibid*, meeting of November 21st 1938, p 17.
[386] NA: HO 186/1520-1521. Emergency Committees and ARP Controllers: legal status and powers 1939-1944.
[387] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Response to Lord Privy Seal's letter of March 31st 1939.

emergency it was necessary for the local authorities to submit their names to the Ministry of Home Security for security vetting and clearance.[388] Both the ARP Controller and the members of the Emergency Committee were given training in the roles that they would be expected to fulfil as well as in the limitations of their powers.[389] Both the positions of ARP Controller and that of the members of the Emergency Committee were for the duration of hostilities only.[390] The local authority was also responsible for the production of regular written reports for Whitehall giving the details of any incidents and the levels of preparedness of its ARP Services in the area.[391]

Despite government awareness of the issues, the effects of raiding were underestimated in some important aspects. The disruption to power and water supplies that could be caused by even a minor air raid was widely misunderstood by both central government and by the majority of local authorities, including those on Tyneside. Transport was also more prone to disruption than had been forecast in the build up to the war. Least attention of all was given to the problem of homelessness that arose from bombing raids. Whilst the projected number of casualties of bombing had been greatly exaggerated, it came as a shock that, whilst large numbers of properties were either destroyed or damaged to the extent that they were rendered uninhabitable, the occupants of these properties often survived relatively unhurt but with no place of shelter. By late 1944 more than 3,000 people from South Shields had been made permanently homeless due to bomb damage whilst many more residents of Tyneside had experienced temporary homelessness due to their evacuation from bomb

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[388] NA: HO 186/2848. Suitability of ARP Controllers: recommendations for appointments of deputies.
[389] NA: HO 186/2873. Instructions to ARP Controllers: duties of ARP Controllers 1940-1943, and also, HO 186/163 (ARP Schools: Controllers' training courses at Falfield. 1940).
[390] NA: HO 186/2129. Emergency Committees and ARP Controllers' disbandment, 1945.
[391] NA: HO 199/400. Survey of state of ARP preparedness in all Regions, 1939.

damaged homes.[392] Throughout the early years of the war this was to prove a problem for the local authorities and led to the creation of a variety of ad-hoc systems designed to cope with these unfortunates. This included the expansion and refinement of the system of rest centres that were already overstretched during raids.

One of the most telling preparations that both central and local authorities put into operation during the period was that of evacuation. The experiences of some evacuees are considered in chapter five. For now, a brief overview of the state of preparation on Tyneside with regard to local evacuation schemes is offered. By April 1938, the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP) had developed plans to evacuate all school children, invalids, and the elderly to rural areas. During the first year of the war 70% of Tyneside children were evacuated, although many quickly returned home.[393] It was recognised that there would be problems in arranging the necessary transportation, accommodation and feeding facilities to ensure the success of the evacuations.[394] There were a total of 75 schools in the Newcastle area and over 43,000 children attending those schools.[395] The evacuation plan was to be in two distinct stages, evacuate all of those who were vulnerable, children, invalids and elderly, immediately when a warning was received by the city ARP authorities and to evacuate those left homeless by a raid.[396] The evacuees were to be moved by local bus companies working in co-operation with the Council Transport Manager. It was recognised that pre-planned routes would have to be arranged if the scheme was not to degenerate into absolute chaos.[397] It was also

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[392] *The Shields Evening News,* October 13th, 1944, p 5.
[393] Harrisson, T, *Living through the Blitz*, p 263.
[394] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Letter from Chief Constable Crawley regarding Evacuation of Populace, April 29th 1938.
[395] A figure that has been disputed. See chapter five.
[396] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Report on the evacuation scheme, June 10th 1938.
[397] *Ibid.*

envisaged that a warden would be in charge of each group of evacuees. The immediate priority at this time was to locate suitable billets and log them. There were obvious difficulties inherent in this local plan: wardens had insufficient experience to cope with large groups of evacuees, billets would have to be inspected before being recommended as suitable, and the transportation plans were sketchy at best. This shows us the level of confusion that resulted from local authorities not knowing exactly what was required from them. It is peculiar that South Shields was originally not included in the evacuation plan. This was an oversight that led to calls from the local Head Teacher's Association for either mass evacuation or the building of deep air raid shelters.[398] The area was not classified as an evacuation area until May 18th 1939.[399]

It was recognised at an early stage that the voluntary ARP services would be expected to liaise closely with the regular civil authorities. Well in advance of the commencement of hostilities thousands of regular police officers were being trained in anti-gas warfare and being informed of their expected increase in duties in the event of a war. Police officers were forbidden from retiring for the duration of the conflict, but there was initially little change in their day to day duties. Indeed the morale of many police officers increased during the first months of the war as many criminals and dubious characters were conscripted, leading to an initial, and temporary, downturn in the national crime rate. However, many police forces were unprepared, or simply too small: 41 of the 181 forces in England and Wales in 1932 had fewer than 50 officers, to cope with the extra duties which rapidly became necessary in wartime. A report by His Majesty's Inspectorate in 1938-1939 stated

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[398] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, meeting of February 21st 1939, p 23.
[399] TWAS: T179/338. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), May 5th 1939 – November 25th 1941, meeting of May 18th 1939, p 7.

that there was a lamentable and complete failure to understand the extent of the extra burden placed upon them by the majority of the police forces in the country.[400] This was due, in part, to the cost-cutting which marked the police forces' experience in the 1930s. When the forces were expected to expand their manpower and their duties, it led to an impossible situation. Further problems arose when regular police officers were seconded to ARP departments within local authorities and the forces were ordered to undertake the majority of the training of ARP wardens. All of these demands placed an unbearable stress on some of the local police forces.

On August 22nd 1939 the revised police war instructions were sent out to all county and borough police forces. They also went to the River Tyne Police due to the "strategic importance of that force."[401] These instructions ordered the police to mount armed guards at all vulnerable points within their area. To help the police forces to cope with the extra duties the revised instructions also ordered the expansion of all police forces by 50%. Regional Commissioners were also appointed at this time. In the North East this role was undertaken by Lord Harlech. These Regional Commissioners were given operational responsibility for civil defence services and charged with co-ordinating the work of local authorities with central government. Most Chief Constables viewed this measure with disdain; looking on it as an impingement on their operational independence.

The steady loss of men to the armed forces throughout the early months of the war, alongside the lack of volunteer reserve police officers and pre-war secrecy in an attempt not to alarm the public, meant that there was no effective appeal for volunteers. This contributed to a steady decrease in both the effectiveness and the morale of the police forces. In an effort to combat this Regulation 29B of the Defence

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[400] Donaldson, R, 'Policing the War', Unpublished PhD, University of Huddersfield, 1998, pp 72-73.
[401] *Ibid*, p 68.

Regulations Act ensured that police service was a reserved occupation from June 1940 and that participation in the Police War Reserve counted as ARP duty. There was also an increasing demand for special constables to bolster the regular police force. Special constables undertook all the duties of a regular officer, including the mounting of armed guard on vulnerable points, and so took pressure off regular forces for the purposes of combating the rising levels of crime during the war. Retention of special constables remained a problem throughout the war, however, as other services seem to have been more appealing. In Newcastle City Police Force there were 470 special constables in June 1938 and by September the number had risen to 540; but by April 1939 the number had dropped to 509.[402]

Much the same applied to the regular fire brigades of the time, many of which were under the supervision of local police forces. They were small, often badly equipped forces, which had no hope of being able to handle a major air raid on their own. The firemen of the time were also trained ambulance men and the two services that we recognise today were often combined during the period. Once again, men were lost in the early months of the war to conscription but by June 1940 the profession was regarded as a reserved occupation under section 29B.

Many of the duties that would be performed in the event of an air raid were of a specialised nature, and an entirely separate and largely volunteer force was envisaged to perform these tasks. This decision led to the pre-war creation and training of an air raid Warden Service.

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[402] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Personnel figures, June 30th 1938 – April 21st 1939.

The Warden Service

What was the Warden Service? The Warden Service was designed to enable the country to cope with large-scale raiding and still be able to function in a military and an industrial capacity. This was the reason for the services being recruited from the civilian population, and in many cases being part-time and voluntary in nature. The primary concerns of the government were that, in the event of sustained raids, the general populace remained capable of performing their necessary war work and to bolster morale. This was clearly recognised in the formation of the Warden Service.

On Tyneside the structure of the warden service in the various areas was similar. As a result, the levels of co-operation were not affected by differences in organisation to any large degree. The initial development of ARP measures, and the formation of the necessary groups, would seem to have been ponderously slow. Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee) recorded at its first meeting in October 1935 that it could make no decisions as to what steps should be taken as it lacked sufficient information to base any decisions upon.[403] Over the course of the next two years there were very few meetings held and so little or no action was taken to provide adequate ARP measures. Until the Munich Crisis there were reportedly only seventeen or eighteen fully trained wardens to cover the whole area and this resulted in a subsequent problem with the provision of further training. The year 1938 saw several recruitment meetings, and, though attendance was reportedly very good, there was a very little interest in the enrolment forms that were distributed: only five percent were completed and returned.[404] This may not have been the case everywhere, however. In Newcastle, for example, there were over 2,000 registered

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[403] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee).
[404] *Ibid.*

wardens in service by May 1938.[405] By September this number had increased to almost 2,500.

Other areas were slower to organise their forces. In April 1938 South Shields County Borough Council reported that it had only 59% of the required number of Wardens that it envisaged as being necessary in an emergency.[406] Worries over the shortages in the ARP scheme on Tyneside resulted in a publicity campaign involving posters, announcements at cinema showings, and a speech given at greyhound meetings in South Shields. It would appear that the campaign, alongside the worsening situation, had the desired effect. By February of 1939 South Shields had some 79% of its required quota of Wardens, the majority of them being women.

The training of wardens was vital to the smooth functioning of the service. The warden's role was complicated by the fact that no one in authority really knew what to expect. In Whitley Bay and Newcastle this resulted in the first classes concentrating largely on anti gas warfare measures and methods to help the enforcement of the widely-resented blackout. The ability of both central and local authority to provide adequate training of wardens proved to be a severe problem prior to the war and during the early months of the conflict. To take the example of the 2,500 Newcastle wardens given above; of this number approximately half had been fully trained whilst another 200 were still reportedly undergoing training.[407] The difficulties of providing adequate training in a short time frame were to prove a consistent and long-standing problem for the local authorities throughout the war.

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[405] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee: Air Raid Precautions. Records of preparations to be put into place with regard to ARP measures in the event of war being declared, May 13th 1938.

[406] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, p 2, meeting of April 4th 1939. The wartime required strength of the Warden Service was put at 1,600 but only 946 were enrolled at this time. There is no mention of how many of these were trained.

[407] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes of the Committee, September 16th 1938, p 122.

Several methods were used to attempt to solve the problem, ranging from weekend training camps and schools run by the military and/or civil authorities, to night classes run by senior officials from within the ARP services to the simple, though often problematic, solution of on the job training.[408] Many wardens received the very basic training that was required and were then posted to learn at the hands of their more experienced colleagues. Practice raids and extensive drills were utilised both prior to and throughout the war to sharpen the skills of the warden service. These drills were carried out on a regular basis and often in conditions of blackout in order to attempt to simulate wartime conditions.[409] An admirable trait of the warden service throughout the conflict was its willingness to train so enthusiastically in an effort to improve the service efficiency. Exercises and simulations were seen as the most effective means of training members by most of the local authorities: "Local exercises including all personnel attached to the ARP Services and Control Centre were constantly being held and this had the effect of greatly increasing the efficiency of the services."[410]

These exercises highlight the ability of the warden service to experiment with different systems and to adapt its methods in order to provide greater efficiency as a result of lessons learned. A good example of this is shown by the difficulties experienced by Whitley Bay area with its messaging system. As a result of this an exercise was held in May 1940 and from the results it was determined that there were several forms of messages that were unnecessary and caused confusion. These were discontinued and the service improved as a result.[411]

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[408] NA: HO 186/1571. Regional Training Schools for ARP Officers 1941-1944.
[409] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee: Air Raid Precautions. Training report, p 233, April 21st 1939.
[410] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Civil Defence Report 1939-1945.
[411] *Ibid*, Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee). Notes on the exercise of May 28th 1940.

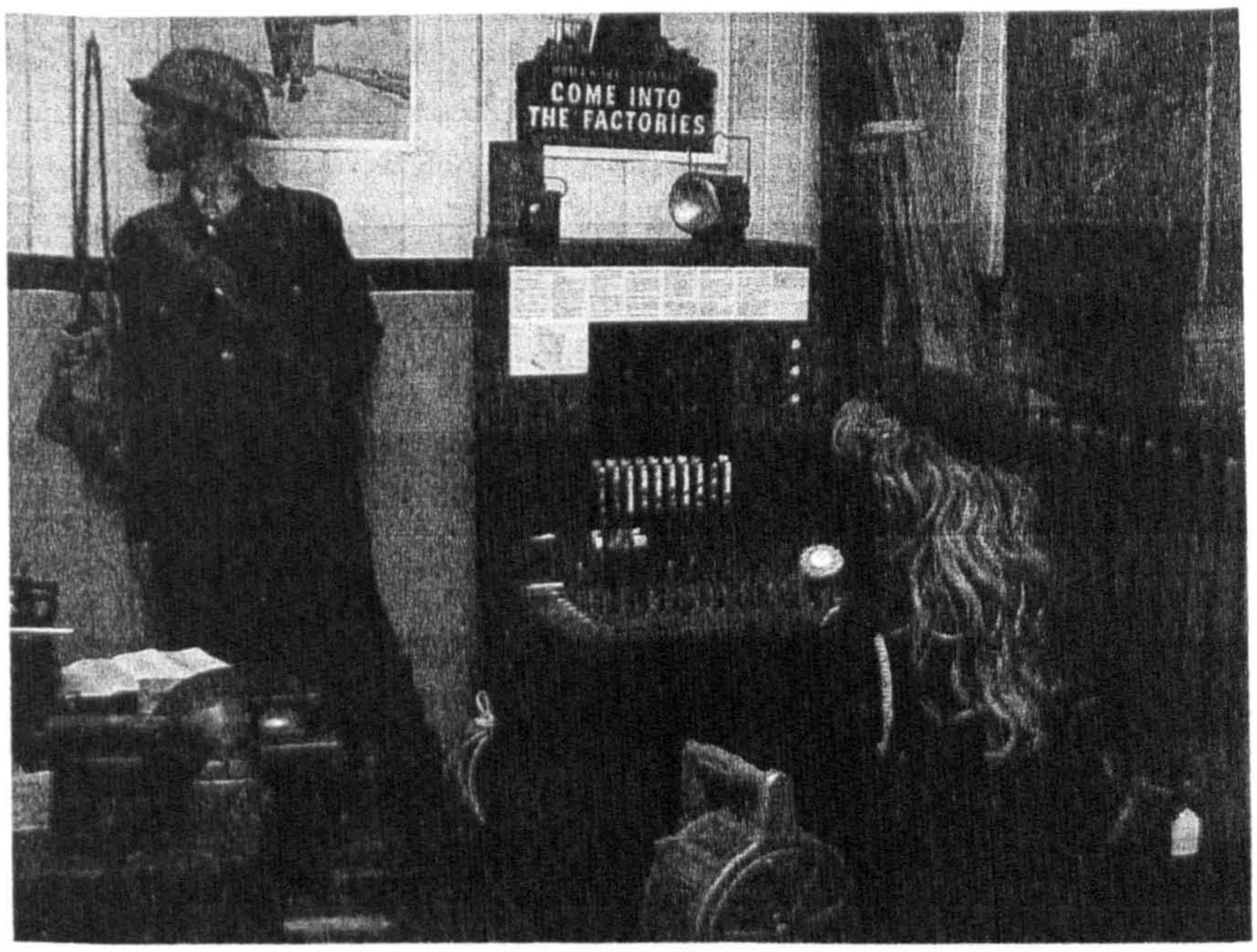

Figure 2. A mock-up of a typical warden post. Note the switchboard and uniforms.[412]

The instructional lecture was also used as a training method by the warden service throughout the war years. These were primarily intended to increase understanding of the duties of a warden and to give some insight into the working of the overall ARP system as a whole. These lectures were usually given by guest speakers from within the local ARP organisation and were intended as refresher courses and to give updates in new organisational systems. An example of this type of training was the series of meetings chaired by Assistant Chief Constable Bell of Newcastle City Police throughout August 1943 that dealt with the functions of the report centre and the nature of warden reports at incidents.[413]

The relatively advanced training methods undertaken by the warden service were reflected by the service's willingness to learn lessons from other areas that had been raided more heavily than Tyneside. Reports were presented to the relevant committee and a list of possible training requirements was drawn up after analysis.

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[412] From the author's own collection. Original display in the Military Vehicle Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.
[413] TWAS: PA/NC/5/51. Newcastle City Police Wartime Files re: Air Raid Precautions. Talk given by Mr B H Clapperton, sub-controller of "C" Division, August 3rd 1943.

These requirements were then filtered down to a more local level so that the local wardens could begin to put more advanced methods into practice. An example of this is the recommendations by Newcastle's Regional Training Officer that greater efforts must be allocated dealing with incidents over a wide area, dealing with warden casualties, co-ordinating action, and collating data.[414]

Training would appear to have been well organised and planned on a local level. The abilities of the warden service in the Tyneside area show a consistent and steady improvement throughout the war despite problems with an ageing workforce and a shortage of manpower during some periods. The organisation of the training regime for wardens is most impressive. By early 1941 all Newcastle area wardens had received a copy of the booklet 'What everyone should know After an Air Raid'.[415] This pamphlet earned wide-spread praise from the region's Civil Defence Commissioner.[416] Rigorous training appears to have taken place on an exceptionally regular basis up until the closing stages of the war.[417] The results were not only analysed, but, where prudent, action was taken as a result of the training findings. The upper levels of the warden service showed a willingness to learn not only from their own mistakes but also from those of other areas of the country and the neighbouring authorities.[418]

The usual method of organisation for ARP services was for the local authority to divide its area into several districts. In the case of Northumberland County Council there were seven districts, although it is unclear whether this was across the whole

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[414] *Ibid.* Analysis of Lesson Learned from recent raids, presented by Mr J A Hanlon, March 31st 1944.
[415] TWAS: 359/794 (50). Memo from F J Crawley (Chief Constable) re: ARP matters, January 2nd 1941.
[416] *Ibid*, letter from Civil Defence Commissioner (Northern Region), Sir A Lambert, January 8th 1941.
[417] TWAS: PA/NC/5/51. Newcastle City Police Wartime Files re: Air Raid Precautions. Details of forthcoming exercises, August 9th 1944.
[418] TWAS: 359/794 (5). Emergency Shelters/Feeding Centres. Report to the Public Assistance Officer of Newcastle upon Tyne re: Lessons learned from the raid on South Shields on April 9th/10th, 1941, April 16th 1941.

county or applied just to south-east Northumberland. These districts were then separated into various sectors each with its own warden post that was responsible for the reporting of events within its sector. Warden Services varied somewhat from area to area but the Whitley Bay area, which was estimated to contain a population of just over 50,000,[419] represents a fairly standard example of the Warden Service on Tyneside. The first warden systems were cumbersome and unnecessarily complicated. The Whitley Bay Area was at first divided into 52 sectors each with its own warden post envisaged. As the system became more organised and lessons were absorbed from other areas the number of sectors, and thus warden posts, to continue with the example of Whitley Bay area, was scaled down to a more manageable fifteen.[420]

Several wardens staffed each of these warden stations and one of them was designated as the post's head warden. The warden posts were expected to respond to any incident in their area and to report back to the area control room so that any required aid could be dispatched and in order that the overall situation could be monitored. The control room personnel, under the direction of the Area Controller, interpreted the reports of the local wardens and decided upon and initiated any actions that were believed to be necessary. This included the calling of other required services and, if necessary, the summoning of mutual aid from a neighbouring area to help out.[421]

The local wardens were also responsible for the initial reaction to an incident. They were usually expected to be the first service to arrive at the scene of an incident and so they had a crucial role to play. Wardens were usually local to their area and often had, or established, relationships with many of the local residents. This was

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[419] NA: BT 64/3260. Post War Survey of Tyneside, p 1.
[420] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee).
[421] *Ibid*, pp 6-9.

often a positive development, but, where a warden was unpopular it could lead to increased difficulties. The local community saw a popular warden as the leader of all air raid precaution policy within his area of influence. The wardens did indeed have a great deal of influence, in some aspects this went far beyond their actual purview, and were often prepared to promote their own schemes if they thought that it would benefit the area. In the Kenton area of Newcastle this resulted in a joint appeal for female volunteers who would be trained in the use of stirrup pumps as well as asking for small contributions in order to purchase necessary fire fighting equipment for the area.[422] This was a local and purely voluntary attempt to increase the efficiency of the warden service as is shown by the concluding paragraph of the letter: "This is a private enterprise on the part of the wardens in your area, and nobody is impelled in any way to participate." As the war progressed the wardens were also responsible for the organisation of the Fire Guard system. On duty, wardens required the assistance of a sizeable reinforcement from several voluntary services in order for them to complete their duties effectively and efficiently. Many of these units will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

This warden system was prone to some problems during a heavy raid; most essentially this was because the system of reporting was heavily reliant upon the telephone system. This was often disrupted during bombing raids and was even susceptible during periods of bad weather. The Whitley Bay Area Control Room was left completely isolated for a short time during the severe winter weather of February 1941, when snow brought down priority telephone lines in the area.[423] As a result of these problems there was an increased reliance on, and demand for, volunteer messengers. These messengers were usually boys aged between sixteen and eighteen,

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[422] TWAS: DX385/1/1. Home Guard and Civil Defence files. Letter from local wardens. Not dated but most likely pre-1939, or very early in the war.
[423] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee).

but it was commonly believed that they could not be relied upon to turn out for drills due to the voluntary nature of their service.

Whitley Bay seems to have suffered particularly acute problems from recalcitrant volunteer messengers. As was pointed out in a report to the ARP Committee, "only a very few were really interested in the Service unless there had been an alert...but certain of the neighbouring areas seemed to have a very efficient Messenger Service and interest was very keen."[424] The reliance on young lads and youths could result in high-jinks and larking about. During one alert, early in the war, a group of fifteen messengers, having grown bored with the lack of employment, were discovered by local police officers marching along the promenade wearing full anti-gas clothing and steel helmets, much to the concern of several local residents.[425]

Whilst some areas did seem to have a more organised messenger service it was still an area of the warden service that was beset by difficulties. Newcastle City voluntary messengers were required to attend two nights every week and one weekend every month because there were many training exercises in order to acquaint the messengers with the conditions of the blackout. The job was very dangerous as the boys were expected to be out in the open with no protection in the midst of an air raid. Not only this, but there were the attendant dangers of riding around in the blackout whilst attempting to avoid roadblocks and air raid trenches. Unfortunately, because of the ages of the messengers they were often lost due to call up to the military services, whilst others, with full time jobs in important industries, were required to work overtime. One of the youngsters who served in this capacity remembers that as a result of these problems: "After a few weeks the bicycle messengers were replaced by full time motor cyclists...so the whole system of

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[424] *Ibid*, p 26.
[425] *Ibid*, p 10.

volunteers was not a success in this case."[426] There were also legal problems concerning the use of children as members of the ARP services. It was announced at a meeting of the local ARP Controllers in early 1940 that the Ministry of Pensions scheme of compensation did not cover messengers under the age of sixteen and so it was decided that boys under this age were not to be used for outdoor duty.[427]

The Rescue Services

At the outset of the war most people, including those in the British government, expected Germany to utilise every weapon at its disposal to drive Britain to its knees. Foremost amongst the fears of the populace, many of whom had experienced the weapon in the First World War, was the spectre of gas attacks. In order to counter this threat several measures were undertaken: the issuing of gas masks, the application of gas detecting paint onto post boxes, and the formulation of Gas Detection and Identification Squads. The men of these squads were often trained chemists or pharmacists who had volunteered for such duties within the ARP services. Fortunately the expected gas attacks did not take place and the men of these squads were quickly absorbed by the other ARP services or re-entered their profession on a full time basis. As the war progressed, it quickly became evident that, whilst casualties were not as high as predicted, there was a need for greater storage of items belonging to those who had been bombed out. This led to the addition of Salvage and Storage Squads, once again a mix of volunteers and council workers, to the ARP organisational umbrella.

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[426] Correspondence from Mr J Amrstrong, 2001.
[427] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Memo from local ARP Controller regarding meeting of February 12th 1940.

Whilst the Warden Service was designed to cope with most incidents the government also recognised the requirement for more specialised ARP organisations. These groups would primarily be responsible for the rescue of trapped persons, their evacuation and medical treatment, fire fighting and the clean up in the aftermath of an incident. As such groups made up mainly of council workers were designated by local authorities as Rescue Squads, whilst street cleaners were organised into Decontamination Squads. The duties of first aid, evacuation and fire fighting were handled by the recruitment of volunteers into the Ambulance Service and First Aid Squads, the stretcher parties and the Auxiliary Fire Service.

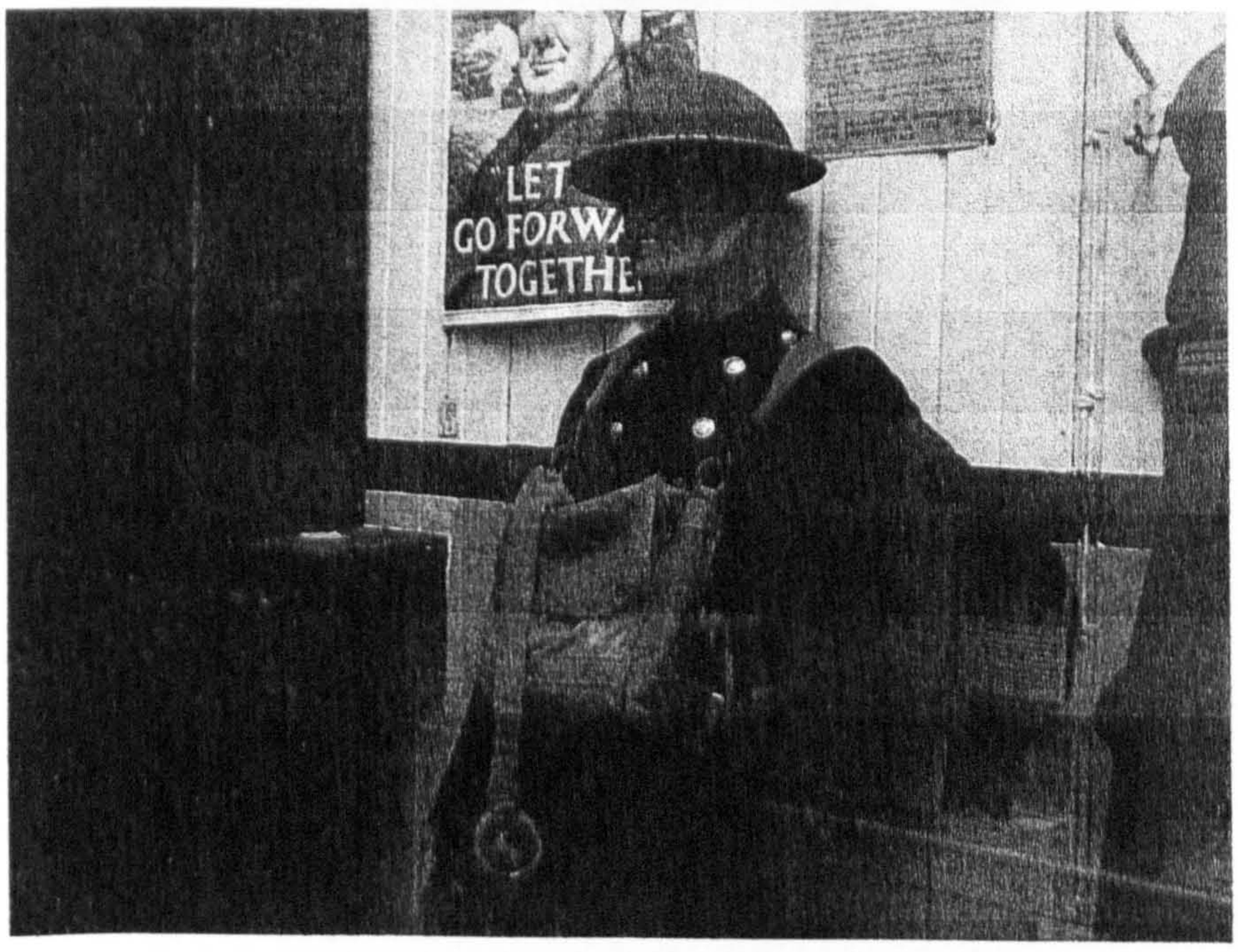

Figure 3. Example of a typical Heavy rescue Squad uniform.[428]

The prospective job of the Decontamination Squads was to be hazardous and poorly rewarded. Not only were they expected to assist in the general clear up operations after an incident but they would also be expected to deal with the release, whether deliberately by the enemy or accidentally by bomb damage, of any dangerous chemical agents. For the squads to effectively fulfil their duties a large sum of money

[428] From the author's own collection. Original in the Military Vehicle Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.

was required to provide adequate equipment and facilities. In Newcastle this need was recognised before the outbreak of hostilities as a decontamination station was prepared at Nevington Road as early as May 1938, at a total cost of £2,500.[429] Whilst they, like the entire population, had gas masks, most of these men had only overalls and heavy gloves to protect themselves from chemical spillage. In the event of enemy chemical attack they did have access to anti-gas suits and a limited number of the protective asbestos suits that were used by some fire fighters.

Figure 4. A Decontamination Squad in anti-gas warfare gear.[430]

Many local authorities placed an early level of priority on the formation of Decontamination Squads, showing how serious they considered the threat of chemical attack before the war and during its early stages. Again this was symptomatic of popular opinion and was reflected by the novels and films of the period. Newcastle ARP Committee received a report dated 28th July 1938 that stated the scale of the decontamination squads in unequivocal terms. By this date there were nearly 250 men that were employed in decontamination duties, the service was divided into four

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[429] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). ARP Committee minutes, May 13th 1938, p61.
[430] Photograph © Newcastle upon Tyne City Libraries & Arts.

divisions (A through D) and had at its disposal 50 vehicles, including reserves. Most of the men in this role were from the Council's Cleansing Department and their service, unlike the majority of ARP workers, was viewed as compulsory.[431] This had already caused some concerns and a complaint had been lodged by the Union of General and Municipal Workers objecting to the service in decontamination squads being compulsory.[432]

Whilst the decontamination squads and their colleagues in the gas identification squads did not have to perform their primary duties they were still an active portion of the ARP services. Decontamination squads were expected, as the war progressed, to perform debris clearance and other, more mundane, ARP duties.[433] During the early stages of the war, however, people were still anxious about the possibility of gas attacks and this led to the squads being called out on several occasions. These false alarms were largely due to panicked mistakes. For example, Whitley Bay decontamination squad and gas identification squad were both called out in September 1940 after a report of someone smelling phosgene gas. Geraniums in a neighbouring garden's flower-bed were later established to be the source of the alert.[434]

The early establishment and strength of the decontamination squads, as well as the unrest that must arise from making service compulsory, shows us how seriously the threat of gas attack was taken by the local authorities of the period. The fact that they were maintained until the end of the war demonstrates that the continuing risk of a last ditch chemical retaliatory attack by Germany was taken seriously in the local

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[431] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Report by Captain Youll and W J Steele (City Engineer's Department) on Demolition and Rescue Services, July 28th 1938, p114.
[432] *Ibid.*
[433] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee).
[434] *Ibid.*

ARP community. The decontamination squads represent an example of how both central and local government was unable accurately to predict the likely events of an air attack and also how efficiently some local authorities were preparing for all eventualities, no matter the cost.

In order to cope with the large numbers of expected casualties most authorities created a network of fully manned first aid posts and stretcher parties. These were to act as triage centres where the casualties could be assessed and the lightly injured treat whilst the more serious cases could be dispatched by ambulance to the nearest local hospital. Professional doctors and nurses staffed some first aid posts but a larger number relied almost entirely on part-time volunteer staff,[435] often Women's Volunteer Service members. In addition to the necessary first aid supplies many were also equipped with at least one ambulance, often a commandeered van, private car or even a bus. Some areas experienced a great degree of difficulty in recruiting sufficient numbers of first aid workers. At South Shields, for example, the numbers of trained ambulance crews remained critical; only 8% of the required 420 had been enrolled by February 1939.[436] Despite further publicity campaigns, the numbers in the medical services remained low. Only 17% of ambulance crews had been recruited, whilst only 19% of vacancies in first aid parties had been filled.[437] Despite these shortfalls the Regional ARP Inspector had expressed his satisfaction as early as October 1938.[438] Possibly the shortfall in ambulance crews was partially balanced by

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[435] NA: LAB 6/166. Recruitment for Police War Reserve, Auxiliary Fire Service and First Aid Services. 1940-1941.
[436] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, meeting of February 21st 1939, p 24.
[437] TWAS: T179/338. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), May 5th 1939 – November 25th 1941, meeting of May 18th 1939, p 7.
[438] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, meeting of October 20th 1938, p 8.

the numbers of those who had volunteered to act as car drivers for the purpose of removing slightly injured victims.

In Newcastle, female volunteers largely dominated the workforce of the first aid posts. The problem of securing male first aid workers was pinpointed as early as 1938 by the city's Chief Medical Officer of Health in a report to the ARP Committee in which he stated that the recruitment levels of male first aid workers was wholly inadequate and that strenuous efforts would be required to remedy the situation.[439] The overall level of medical training within the city was criticised in the above report; it was estimated that on average less than twenty percent of the staff in the city's municipal hospitals could be regarded as fully trained. Two instructional first aid posts were also set up in the city (Jesmond Dene House and at Lough Model House) in order to encourage volunteers to come forward and to aid in their initial training.

The first aid posts also served as the bases of the first aid parties who would respond to the scene of an incident at the request of the local control centre. The demand for drivers in the ARP services as a whole was high and this was especially true of the first aid parties who required ambulance drivers if they were to be able to respond promptly. In the Whitley Bay area there were two first aid posts: at the Garden Café and at West Monkseaton High School, which housed nine first aid parties. Eleven ambulances were stationed either at these locations or in nearby premises. The aid posts and the ambulances were fully manned for twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week placing great strain upon the volunteers. As well as the long hours the staff had to quickly adjust to witnessing sights that few could have witnessed before the commencement of hostilities. As they responded to incidents immediately they also placed themselves at great risk as they were expected to be

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[439] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minute & Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Report of the Medical Officer of Health, May 13th 1938.

available even during the heaviest raid, inevitably this led to some casualties. On the whole the first aid organisation on Tyneside was not seriously tested, raids did produce a number of casualties but there was never a sufficient number as to flood the aid posts and hospitals. This is perhaps fortunate as questions can be raised as to whether the first aid organisations on Tyneside could have coped with sustained raiding. In Newcastle especially there was a problem with the retention of first aid workers and withdrawals were said to be "substantial".[440] Where there were serious incidents the authorities appear to have coped well with the need to supply sufficient medical attention. The schemes of mutual aid that existed between the different ARP areas on Tyneside allowed help to reach any one area if it had suffered a large number of casualties in a single incident.

In the event of incendiary raids it was realised that the regular Fire Brigades would be quickly overwhelmed and would thus require extensive voluntary support. The governmental answer was to institute a large and purely voluntary fire fighting force, the AFS.[441] The members of the AFS were paid at a roughly commensurate rate to the members of the regular Brigades, a fact that caused a degree of resentment towards the 'amateurs'. Conditions in some of the assigned quarters were appalling; buildings from private houses to filthy basements were utilised by the AFS.[442] The accommodation of AFS men was said to be poor in London but even worse in many provincial towns and cities. The men of the AFS had never attended the scene of a fire; their duties in the early part of the war largely consisted of pumping out flooded shelters. They were completely inexperienced and for many their first engagement would be on an actual incident involving very real risk to life. The AFS men were

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[440] NA: HO 199/400. Report of the Lord Privy Seal into Preparedness of ARP. Number 1 Region, July 10th 1939, p 5.
[441] NA: HO 187/1775. Auxiliary Fire Service: mobilisation, 1939.
[442] Calder, A, *The People's War*, pp 68-69.

required to work a fireman's hours of forty-eight hours on duty, twenty-four hours off as well as receiving limited sick pay and being eligible for dismissal if they were not fit.[443] The force was split between full timers and part time volunteers; the part timers made up roughly sixty percent of the total AFS manpower.[444]

The equipping of the AFS was a notoriously haphazard and slow affair. The order of one hundred and fifty uniforms for the Newcastle AFS, placed with the lowest bidder, was not expected until late June of 1938.[445] This was despite the fact that by September of that year there were almost 800 members of the AFS in Newcastle, 300 of who were considered fully trained at this time.[446] By September it had been established that the uniforms were of vastly inferior quality, they were described as being too thin and prone to wearing out, and a compromise was eventually reached between Newcastle Council and the manufacturer to pay a discounted price.[447] South Shields County Borough Council claimed that it cost £3.16s.10 and a 1/2d (just under £160) just to clothe an auxiliary fireman.[448] Even the most basic fire-fighting equipment was in perilously short supply and by spring of 1939 there was only one stirrup pump per 1,000 of the population in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne.[449]

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[443] NA: HO 187/33. Auxiliary Fire Service: conditions of service, disciplinary control, machinery for representation etc. 1936-1941.
[444] NA: HO 187/50. Auxiliary Fire Service: war organisation. 1939-1942.
[445] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). ARP Committee minutes, May 13th 1938.
[446] *Ibid*, September 16th 1938, p 122.
[447] *Ibid.*
[448] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, meeting of October 20th 1938, p 11.
[449] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). ARP Committee minutes April 21st 1939, pp 233-236.

Figure 5. The ubiquitous stirrup pump, as used by Fire Guards in Newcastle upon Tyne.[450]

The build-up to the war saw the expansion of fire coverage in most cities, Newcastle was not an exception and the Home Office ordered an increase in the number of trailer pumps. There would be an extra large trailer, ten extra medium capacity trailers and 40 small trailers supplied for the Newcastle area.[451] In addition to these vehicles the AFS used a number of commandeered cars, vans and trucks. Orders were placed for regular fire fighting engines but these were slow in arriving and were largely confined to the regular Brigades. In the Whitley Bay area in 1940 there were only two purpose-built fire engines, compared to eighteen trailer pumps of varying capacities.[452] Recruitment to the AFS also underwent something of a boom in the period immediately before the war. By April 1939 the Newcastle AFS numbered some 1,375 volunteers, just short (91%) of the proposed necessary wartime strength

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[450] From author's own collection. Original in the Military Vehicle Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.
[451] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minute to the ARP Committee, September 16th 1938, p 122.
[452] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Northumberland County Council booklet: ARP, 1940.

of 1,500.[453] By comparison, South Shields had a compliment of 299 auxiliaries from a wartime requirement of 500 (60%) at this time.[454]

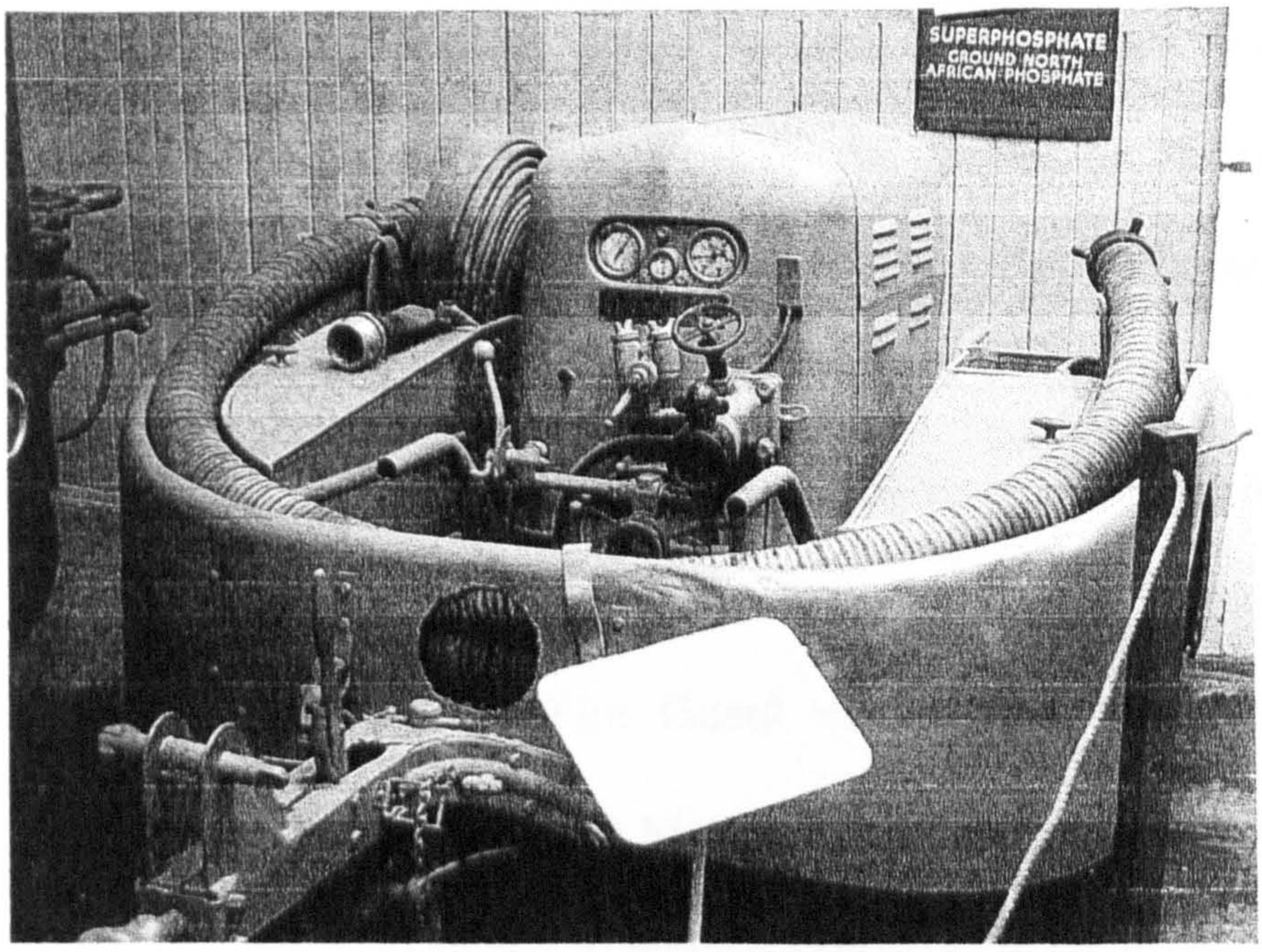

Figure 6. A Sigmund fire pump trailer. This one was used in Newcastle and was manufactured locally.[455]

Examples of heavy raiding in other parts of the country, most especially London and Coventry, led to an increase in the pace of equipping the AFS on Tyneside. These raids had showed that the number of fires was much higher than had been expected and that the AFS and the regular fire services were often rapidly overwhelmed.[456] An exercise, held in January 1941, intended to simulate a heavy blitz type attack on Tyneside, estimated that the fire services would be required at the scene of in excess of seventy major fires and would need some two hundred and fifty-seven pumps in order to even hope to cope with such an incident. Even this was

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[453] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Report on ARP measures, April 21st 1939, p233-236.
[454] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, meeting of May 5th 1939, p 33.
[455] From the author's own collection. Original in the Military Vehicle Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.
[456] Lancaster, B & Mason, T (eds), *Life & Labour in a 20th Century City: The Experience of Coventry* (Cryfield Press, 1992).

slightly optimistic as it was estimated that the general public, in the guise of firewatchers, would be able to cope with many small fires. The experiences of other cities around Britain had also showed that air raids badly affected the abilities of the fire services by blocking roads, disrupting water mains and so on.[457] A further result of lessons learned from previous raids was that the priority for the fire services was not to extinguish the blaze but to ensure it was contained so that the search for survivors could proceed quickly and in reasonable safety.[458]

The realisation that an incendiary raid would quickly overwhelm the AFS and regular fire brigades led to the formation of another organisation. Service in this organisation, variously known as the Fire Guard or the Fire Watch, became compulsory for men up to 65 and women up to 45 years of age. Rotas were set up and training with stirrup pumps organised so that the organisation could hope to deal with small fires and incendiary bombs. Untenanted buildings could not be left without a guard and street watches became commonplace with neighbours taking turns to work in shifts from dusk until dawn, the organisation again gave free reign to those with organisational skills and a variety of levels of competence were achieved. In Newcastle, the Osbaldeston Gardens fire watch leader ensured that each member was familiar with the equipment, shelters and ARP arrangements of at least three neighbouring houses so as to, "facilitate speedy action in emergency."[459] The fire-watching organisation was of most importance in the suburbs of major cities and in semi-urban areas. The Newcastle ARP authorities conceded, in a letter to fire watch street leaders, "that in the event of a severe attack upon Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the

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[457] Longmate, N, *Air Raid: The Bombing of Coventry, 1940* (Hutchinson, 1976). Also Lancaster, B & Mason, T (eds), *Life and Labour in a 20th Century City: The Experience of Coventry* (Cryfield Press, 1992).

[458] TWAS: PA/NC/5/51. Newcastle City Police Wartime Files re: ARP, Memo from J Atkinson, Town Clerk, regarding lessons learned from raids that have occurred recently, April 3rd 1944.

[459] TWAS: DX385/1/2. Newcastle upon Tyne Home Guard & Civil Defence files. List of fire watch duties compiled by street leader, Mr H Dove, January 25th 1941.

Fire-fighting personnel and equipment from the suburbs would in all probability be drawn into the centre of the city, so that each residential area would have to deal with local fires on its own account."[460] This was a revealing admission on the part of the local authority suggesting that it would be unable to cope with the demands of a major raid without help from outside the area.

AFS men, like most of the ARP services, were expected to work throughout air raids and had one of the most dangerous jobs in the ARP organisation. During the course of the war more than 800 fire personnel lost their lives and in excess of 7,000 were seriously injured.[461] On Tyneside the AFS and the regular Fire Service suffered ten fatalities during the war. This was a lighter figure than one would have expected given the severity of raiding experienced, especially during 1941, the worst year.

The fire services in Britain prior to the commencement of war were chaotic and uncoordinated. Over 1,600 separate brigades existed in Britain in 1938, most of which had fewer than twenty men. The majority of brigades were run by, or in co-operation with, the local police force. There was no standardisation of equipment, a factor that could lead to frustration and even disaster when a neighbouring brigade attempted to lend assistance during a crisis. Some commanders would not allow neighbouring brigades into their own areas for fear that they would be criticised by the local authority for incurring unnecessary expenses. It was realised by central government that action must be taken to co-ordinate the fire services and to ensure co-operation and adequate training. On 13th May 1941 the announcement was made of the founding of the NFS, the many small brigades were to broken down into less than 50 and all were to fall under a central control. A central training school was established and supported by five regional schools had trained some 6,000 men by the

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[460] TWAS: DX385/1/4. Newcastle upon Tyne Home Guard & Civil Defence files. List of fire watch duties compiled by street leader, Mr H Dove, January 25th 1941.
[461] Calder, A, *The People's War*, pp 208-209.

end of 1943. In the event many of the AFS men were given full time command posts in preference to their pre-war professional colleagues. Such a wide-ranging change would have been unthinkable before the war and serves as a good example of what can be achieved during the stresses, and due to the demands, of a total war.

Increasingly, as lessons were learned from the effects of air raids, the importance of the rescue squads increased as the war progressed. Although these squads had been a recognised part of the Tyneside ARP plans from pre-war years the vital role that they would come to play had not been recognised due to the belief that there would be a more significant proportion of fatalities compared to those who would be survive a raid but be trapped in the resultant debris. The rescue parties were separated into two distinct groups, heavy and light squads. Heavy rescue squads consisted of seven men and a foreman whilst their light counterparts had only five men and a foreman.[462] Most of the men who made up the rescue squads (often referred to as demolition squads) were members of the peacetime building trades. As such, many of the men who worked in rescue parties were civilian volunteers whilst the remainder came from the local authorities Engineering Department. In Newcastle there were 200 men formed into rescue squads by 1939, split equally between civilian volunteers and members of the City Engineers Department.[463] The rescue organisation in the city consisted of ten heavy squads and twenty light squads. These official rescue squads were assisted by ad-hoc road repair and debris clearance squads formed from over 100 men from the City Engineer Department.[464] This meant that by the commencement of hostilities there were some 308 men serving, either officially or otherwise, in the rescue services in Newcastle alone.

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[462] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minute & Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Report by Captain Youll and W J Steele (City Engineer) on Demolition and Rescue Services, October 21st 1938.
[463] *Ibid.*
[464] *Ibid.*

As raiding caused more damage in other parts of the country builders were increasingly in demand in order to make properties habitable again and so take pressure off the support services such as rest centres. This in turn led to an increase in the average wage for members of the building trades. In areas that were comparatively lightly raided, such as some areas of Tyneside, this caused problems with the retention of rescue workers for the local authorities. Volunteers would often secure more profitable employment in a different part of the country and were prone to leaving without first informing the authorities that they would no longer be available for their ARP duties.[465]

The rescue squads received extensive training in their duties, including the use of specialised listening equipment to locate trapped persons. Constant training and evaluation of past experiences led to a steady improvement in the abilities of the rescue squads throughout the course of the war. This was despite the fact that as the war went on the volunteers became more aged and slightly less physically capable,[466] due to call up for armed service and so on. As greater experience was gained by the members of the rescue squads they quickly developed their own guidelines on how to deal with specific incidents. For example, it was quickly discovered that it was safer to dig trapped people out from the side rather than the top of a pile of debris and that heavy lifting cranes were useful only at major incidents and became a hindrance at smaller incidents.[467] There was also a strong criticism that there was a tendency amongst the majority of ARP workers to assume that buried casualties were already

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[465] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee).
[466] TWAS: PA/NC/5/51. Newcastle City Police Wartime Files re: Air Raid Precautions. Report of the Town Clerk, J Atkinson, on lessons learned form recent raids, April 3rd 1944.
[467] *Ibid.*

dead and that this tendency had to be "very strongly discouraged" if the rescue parties were to be successful.[468]

By its very nature the work of the rescue squads was very physically demanding but it could also be mentally fatiguing. The recovery of shattered bodies was a task that most of the rescue workers had not experienced prior to their first call-out. As a result of the demands of this role it was decided that rescue workers should work in very short shifts so as to allow frequent rest and recovery time, something that was not common throughout the ARP services in general. In Newcastle rescue squads worked on a four-hour shift pattern but there were calls that this should be shortened to three hours, following the example of some other local authorities.[469]

Due to the nature of their work and the frequent breaks that the rescue squads enjoyed it would seem that they became the leading rumour mongers amongst the ARP services in some areas. Discussion of incidents during breaks at ARP canteens was commonplace and could on some occasion lead to unfortunate consequences. This was especially true of a raid on Whitley Bay when a human head was found at the scene of a recent incident and the relatives of the deceased found out about this discovery "on the grapevine" due to the gossiping of local rescue workers at a local canteen.[470] After this occurrence all rescue workers were forcibly reminded that their work was to be considered confidential and that discussion of incidents outside of work was forbidden.

The rescue squads were also expected to attend to more mundane ARP duties when there were no incidents in their areas. One of these duties was the use of their transport for the purpose of transferring goods to and from storage. As such the

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[468] *Ibid.*
[469] *Ibid.*
[470] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee). Report on the raid of December 8th 1941.

rescue squads co-operated heavily with the salvage and storage squads who were responsible for removing personal property from damaged buildings and ensuring its safe storage until its owner could be relocated. This service became more necessary as the war went on, as it quickly became obvious that there had been little or no provision for this necessity made before 1940. Whilst it was primarily the owners responsibility the local authority was encouraged to give as much assistance as possible and in the event of an owner not being traced the storage of goods was the responsibility of the authority. Most of the personnel of the salvage and storage squads were council workers or members of the removal trade. The salvaged furniture was placed in storage in warehouses or empty houses that had been commandeered by the local authority. In Newcastle the salvage and storage squads were largely manned by the men of the Association of Warehousemen and Removers with the agreement of the local authority.[471]

Local ARP efficiency relied on co-operation and this was especially true of the rescue squads. As each squad was equipped with a vehicle and a driver they could quickly be asked to render assistance to a neighbouring area. The organisation behind this seems to have functioned smoothly and effectively on Tyneside with many examples of co-operation between neighbouring areas.

<u>The Support & Voluntary Services</u>

The widespread assumption that in the event of heavy raiding there would be large numbers of fatalities led to mistakes being made in the formulation of plans for ARP

[471] TWAS: 359/794 (90). Town Clerks report on ARP procedures.

measures on both a national and a local scale. One of the foremost dangers of this assumption was that it resulted in a lack of preparation for huge numbers of minor casualties and those who were uninjured but had been rendered homeless due to the destruction or damaging of their property.

Early experiences of air raids during the war quickly proved that some more organised method of providing shelter for the needy was required. During the blitz on London one of the most commonly voiced complaints was that people who had been made homeless had nowhere to go. Officialdom seemed uncaring and seemed to treat these unfortunates as casualties as if they had or at least should have been killed. There are stories of local dignitaries taking matters into their own hands and breaking into schools and other public buildings in order to open them up to the homeless. The situation tended to be the same in the provinces, although some such as Newcastle were marginally better prepared, as the official attitude to the results of air raiding had percolated down to the local authorities. Due to the fact that there was little or no official organisation in place to deal with this vital ARP duty most of the organisations that took it upon themselves to care for the needy were of an entirely voluntary nature.

Even when the official scheme of rest centres came into being the centres continued to be organised and staffed by both volunteers and members of various charitable organisations throughout the war. The large numbers of schools that had been closed for the duration were quickly commandeered and designated as either rest or feeding centres, often both were combined. In Wallsend, for example, out of the

total number of ten centres, four were combined rest and feeding centres whilst the other six were rest centres only.[472]

During the early months of the war, and especially the phoney war period, many of the locations approached for use as voluntary accommodation or feeding centres were uncooperative and looked to their own business interests first. Many of these concerns were not only unwilling to give up business but also refused to provide services for the local ARP effort in general.[473] This shows us that when the war seemed far away the blitz spirit could be replaced by a more pragmatic, profit-driven, outlook.

Newcastle Corporation appears to have been satisfied with its scheme for the shelter and feeding of the homeless. Indeed, an official list compiled by the Town Clerk in May 1940 suggests that officially recognised rest and/or feeding centres would be able to accommodate over 14,000 people and could adequately cater for over 6,000 in one sitting.[474] However, the report does not differentiate between the capacity of air raid shelters and rest centres and it is therefore extremely likely that the two figures have been added together giving an overly-optimistic view of the situation. This is further evidenced by the fact that an earlier report in the series, unfortunately undated, gives the total number of people that could be catered for as just over 2,000. Whilst it is likely that there was a significant improvement in the efficiency of the organisation of centres, I find it unlikely that the limited number of rest centres in Newcastle could have coped with as many as 14,000 people in an emergency situation at this stage of the war.

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[472] TWAS: 359/794 (18). Emergency Shelters / Feeding Centres. See also, After *the Raid – Wallsend* (Wallsend Council, official pamphlet, 1940).
[473] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Municipal Borough Council ARP Committee. Memo from local ARP Controller, February 12th 1940.
[474] TWAS: 359/794 (5). Emergency Shelters / Feeding Centres. Report by Town Clerk, Mr J Atkinson, May 17th 1940.

Each centre in Newcastle had a shadow centre, that is, a different location that would be opened in the event of the regular centre being overwhelmed, anyone requiring a rest or feeding centre would thus be directed by a warden to the shadow centre. By November 1940 there were nineteen schools being utilised as rest centres in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, the popularity of school buildings can be explained by three reasons. Schools had facilities that could be used for both sexes at the same time, there were adequate washing and sanitary facilities available in schools and every school had the bonus of an adjacent air raid shelter so that the population of the rest centre could be easily catered for in the event of further raiding.[475]

The centres were organised into three categories: first line centres that could provide food and shelter and were fully equipped; additional centres that provided sleeping accommodation only and were opened only if the first line centres were overwhelmed; and shadow scheme centres that were opened only in the most serious circumstances, for example, during a heavy and sustained period of raiding.[476] At Tynemouth, the Public Assistance Officer was in charge of the centres from his central location in Northumberland Square, North Shields. Each of the eight shelters in this area had an officer in charge and a group of voluntary helpers to run the centre. Local authority policy was to provide at least one hot meal per day and to ensure that there were games and toys organised in order to keep children fully occupied. Bathing was also arranged at nearby cleansing stations and a notice board and common room developed in each centre to engender a community spirit and to keep homeless persons informed of events.[477]

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[475] TWAS: 359/794 (18). Emergency Shelters / Feeding Centres. Report on rest centres, feeding arrangements, November 1940.
[476] TWAS: 359/794 (93). County Borough of Tynemouth – Emergency feeding and shelter scheme. Report of Mr G Brown, Public Assistance Officer, November 1940.
[477] *Ibid.*

Obviously, such a complex organisation demanded the extensive use of a variety of premises. The quest to secure locations for use as centres continued throughout the war and was sometimes met with a mixed response that was not typical of the myth of the blitz spirit representing a community pulling together as a whole. Local cinemas in particular could prove unwilling to grant the use of their premises, even as third line rest centres that would be used only in the event of a dire emergency. As late as December 1940 the manager of the Bamborough Cinema, in Newcastle, would only give his permission if he could be guaranteed the freedom to open for the evening showing, a request that was plainly impossible to grant.[478] It would seem from the evidence that cinemas were the favourite type of location for emergency rest centres, after the schools had been exhausted, despite their obvious deficiencies. Many did not have sufficient air raid shelters, cooking facilities, space for adequate bedding and the fact that balconies would have to be used rendered them of dubious value at best. Possibly the answer lies in the community spirit and togetherness that they fostered in people, much like Londoners gathering in church halls during raids.[479] Indeed after schools and cinemas church buildings were the next most popular premises on the lists of the local authorities. In South Shields four out of the nine first aid and rest centres were church buildings.[480]

Locations with canteen facilities were also sought out and requests were made as to whether they would be able to provide emergency feeding facilities. Unfortunately many of the best canteens were located within major industrial concerns and were fully occupied keeping workers fed throughout the day and night. Their locations also made them targets for any prospective bombing raid on their

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[478] TWAS: 359/794 (110). Additional premises for use as 3rd line rest centres. Correspondence from Mr R Potts, the Relieving Officer, and the manager of the Bamborough Cinema, December 9th 1940.
[479] TWAS: 359/794 (111). Official list of Emergency Rest Centres and Canteens.
[480] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, meeting of December 16th 1938, p 19.

locality and so most of these concerns responded negatively. In Newcastle, however, several major department stores, notably Mark & Spencer's, Fenwick's and C & A Modes, responded to these requests in a very positive manner and were utilised as emergency feeding stations throughout the war, both for the homeless and for ARP workers. Newcastle Brewery was also approached and whilst receptive, despite the constraints of coping for its own workers, there is no evidence to suggest that the location was ever used.[481] This was undoubtedly because of the combustible nature of the chemicals stored at the brewery.

Those who were unfortunate enough to be rendered homeless (Not necessarily bombed out, as an unexploded bomb could render thousands homeless just as efficiently as severe bomb damage could) were immediately directed to their nearest open centre by a warden and were given a free meal while details were taken down. In response to concerns raised by Lord Woolton, the Minister of Food, regarding the physical deterioration of the populace due to poor nutrition communal feeding centres, British Restaurants, were also created. These centres, six in Newcastle, could purchase food more cheaply and provided a nourishing, if basic, menu, usually consisting of potatoes and vegetable pie.

Once again the only way lessons could be learned was from shared experience. Local authorities co-operated well on Tyneside furnishing each other with information after each raid in order that all lessons could be passed on. The efficiency of this procedure is shown by the series of reports drawn up in response to raids on other areas. As an example a raid on South Shields on the night of the 9th of April 1941 led to a report being issued by the Public Assistance Officer of Newcastle just six days later. This report is critical of some aspects of the efficiency of the South

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[481] TWAS: 359/794 (111). Official list of Emergency Rest Centres and Canteens.

Shields centres, at one centre no details were taken of the people who were sent there, no attempt was made to get those persons who were shocked to bed and lavatories and sanitary conditions were also criticised.[482] This shows that whilst there were problems with the running of the centres steps were being taken to correct any faults and lessons were being observed in order to improve the standards of care for those left homeless. As a result of the report into the South Shields raid it was decided that it would be helpful if one of the staff at all centres was designated a children's nurse as it had been observed that children rapidly grew bored in the confines of a rest centre.

It became the job of the local authority's Public Assistance Committee's to locate and secure accommodation for those who had been rendered homeless. The properties that were used were varied in nature ranging from sports pavilions to scouts huts and convents.[483] These locations along with the rest and feeding centres were furnished and equipped by the local authorities at substantial cost, the cost of outfitting ten centres in 1939 came to £2574.19s.0d. (£102,998 today) As ever it was the ephemera that presented the most difficulties. Cups, utensils and other crockery were in very short supply and there was a great deal of difficulty in securing adequate supplies of these vital items, to the extent that public appeals were made, in order to equip the centres.[484] Another constant fault in the system was the fact that most of the rest / feeding centres depended upon gas or electricity for cooking and lighting. In the event of a major raid, or even just one lucky bomb on a mains supply pipe, these supplies would quickly become unavailable and the one of the centres' main functions would be rendered ineffective.

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[482] TWAS: 359/794 (18). Emergency Shelter / Feeding centres. Report by J Robinson, Public Assistance Officer, re: Lessons learned from the raid on South Shields, April 16th 1941.
[483] TWAS: 359/794 (79). Official List of accommodation. Records of the Newcastle Public Assistance Committee.
[484] *Ibid*, official list of Emergency Rest Centres and Canteens.

In Newcastle the Director of Education became responsible for the running of the feeding centres, probably because most were located in school buildings, and it was his intention to be able to provide emergency catering for five percent of the total population of Newcastle upon Tyne, almost 15,000 people. To accomplish even adequate coverage the local authority believed that it would be necessary to establish fifteen centres, the government at first gave permission for only five but a compromise was reached at the total of eleven. This shows how central government was unwilling, or unable, to adjust its attitudes to a local situation. Also this gives us some measure of the central government priority towards rest and feeding centres as opposed to the local authority in Newcastle. Central government inefficiency continued to plague the feeding centres, it was standard procedure to serve cold, tinned food when a feeding centre was opened. This food would then have to be paid for and replaced. An incident in September 1940, that left 30 Newcastle residents homeless, led to the discovery that it was cheaper to obtain a hot meal from a local Central Kitchen than it was to replace the tinned foods that were in storage. This became standard procedure where feasible in Newcastle, but was not officially recognised by the central government.

Over 800 volunteers were involved in the running of the rest centres in Newcastle during 1940, in addition to the staff responsible for the eleven dedicated feeding centres that were also operating at the time. Many of these volunteers were members of the WVS, as were a huge number of the volunteers who were responsible for the driving of ambulances, mobile canteens and so on. Formed in 1938, the brainchild of the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, under the overall leadership of Lady Stella Reading the WVS came to be a most valued part of the ARP services, even though officially not a part of those services. By the end of 1941 the WVS had a

membership of over 1,000,000 women.[485] The level of participation and commitment of the WVS can be seen by the organisational chart of their Air Raids Welfare Committee.[486] In South Shields the WVS, led by a Mrs Chapman, took over the recruitment of women into the ARP services, perhaps explaining the local success in recruiting women into duties as Wardens and at first aid posts and rest centres.[487]

At first, there was considerable opposition to another female voluntary organisation, as it was thought that the organisation would too often seek to act on its own initiative. This sense of initiative became the WVS' greatest trait and indeed its hallmark quality. The service quickly developed a reputation for solving any problems that were thrown its way and for filling in important gaps in both national and local ARP schemes. Despite the work carried out staffing rest and feeding centres the WVS personnel also played an active role in caring for evacuees, staffing the British Restaurants, organising welfare clinics, operating an information bureau, the warden service (staffing telephones and acting as messengers), the Civil Nursing Reserve, the LDV / Home Guard and in the Women's Land Army. The members of the WVS also actively participated in first aid and fire fighting courses where they could. The members of the WVS were also responsible for the running of the information centres where, after a raid, relatives could go to find details of their family and loved ones. This was an often melancholy yet immeasurably important task and one that the central government had little prepared for.

Although often seen as a force that dispensed aid and comfort the WVS was in no way a pacifist organisation. The service also produced camouflage netting and designed and created sniper suits for use by the Army, despite criticism from some

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[485] Westwood, L, 'More than Tea and Sympathy', *History Today*, 48, 6 (June 1998), pp 3-4.
[486] Appendix B, table iii.
[487] TWAS: T179/337. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), April 4th 1938 – May 5th 1939, meeting of November 21st 1938, p 16.

quarters that this was beyond its official remit. The truth was that the WVS had no official remit and so was free to operate where and how it saw fit. The work undertaken by these volunteers was often dangerous and unpleasant: nationally, over 200 WVS members were killed while on war duty.[488] The service crossed class barriers, despite the myth that the WVS was populated by middle class women who had no other function. In fact, the WVS enabled old and young women, working class and upper class, to work together for a cause that they had voluntarily given up their free time for, a further example of total war breaking down the barriers that had existed in Britain for centuries. The effectiveness of the WVS can be measured by the fact that the service is still in existence to this day performing charitable community spirited works whilst most other voluntary organisations formed in the crucible of the war have long ceased to exist.

A Whole Greater than its Parts?

The ARP services on Tyneside did not have to cope with the expected heavy and sustained raiding that occurred in other, strategically less important, parts of the country, as can be seen by the gradual slackening of the services that took place by October 1944. The Whitley Bay control centre ceased to be manned on a full time basis on November 15th 1944 and even became the venue for local social events, dances and concerts every Thursday night, though it was reported that these were not well attended.[489] Even so there were some incidences of heavy individual raids and occasions when casualties were high, most notably the Wilkinson's shelter incident in

[488] Westwood, L, 'More than Tea', p 5.
[489] TWAS: MB/WB27/1 (T135/45). Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee), final report, 1945.

North Shields, and the ARP services seem to have dealt with most of the problems that were presented. Often the large incidents resulted in areas such as Tynemouth County borough calling on mutual aid from nearby areas such as Whitley Bay and Newcastle.

It appears that the system of mutual aid was especially strong on Tyneside with many recorded examples of aid being sent from various locations without it even being requested. A North Tyneside Co-ordination Committee made up from representatives of the various local authorities and ARP departments undoubtedly helped in the forming of this bond of co-operation. This committee was set up formally on March 25th 1942 but had existed in an informal manner for some time previously.[490] The role of the committee was to deal with problems that it was perceived would have an effect on the area in general rather than one specific location within the area. A conference held in Newcastle in June 1941, for example, had discussed the arrangements that would be necessary in case of a large exodus from local towns in the event of heavy raiding. This resulted in the building of temporary hutted accommodation for nearly 3,000 people who had been bombed out but whose work was of national importance. Cooking depots were also organised as a direct result of this conference showing the high levels of co-ordinated planning that the areas officials could reach.

The spirit of co-operation is the overwhelming aspect from the ARP documents of the North Tyneside authorities (Wallsend Municipal Borough, Tynemouth County Borough, and Whitley and Monkseaton Unitary District); this even ran to the voluntary organisations. The WVS formed several Mobile (Mutual Assistance) teams consisting of members skilled in cooking, first aid, gathering and

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[490] TWAS: 359/809 (2). Correspondence File: North Tyneside Co-ordination Committee, minutes of meeting reporting on matters dealt with in the last year.

disseminating information and organising and providing clothing. These teams, of which there were forty-one in 1942, were provided with transport and could locate from area to area as they were required.

Whilst many of the ARP services suffered from either lack of equipment or expertise they seem to have made up for this, at least on Tyneside, by organising their own systems of training and through fostering a spirit of healthy co-operation with each other. Whilst there is evidence to suggest that in the early months of the war, when the expected heavy air raids did not appear, a large number of volunteers began to lose enthusiasm and drift away from the services. Again this is not conducive to the opinion of every citizen pulling together. Indeed the attitude of the general public on Tyneside towards ARP workers and the organisations as a whole continued to be one of apathy well into the war.[491] However, once raiding did commence and the national situation became grim the overall enthusiasm would appear to have returned and the public attitude improved towards those volunteer ARP workers.

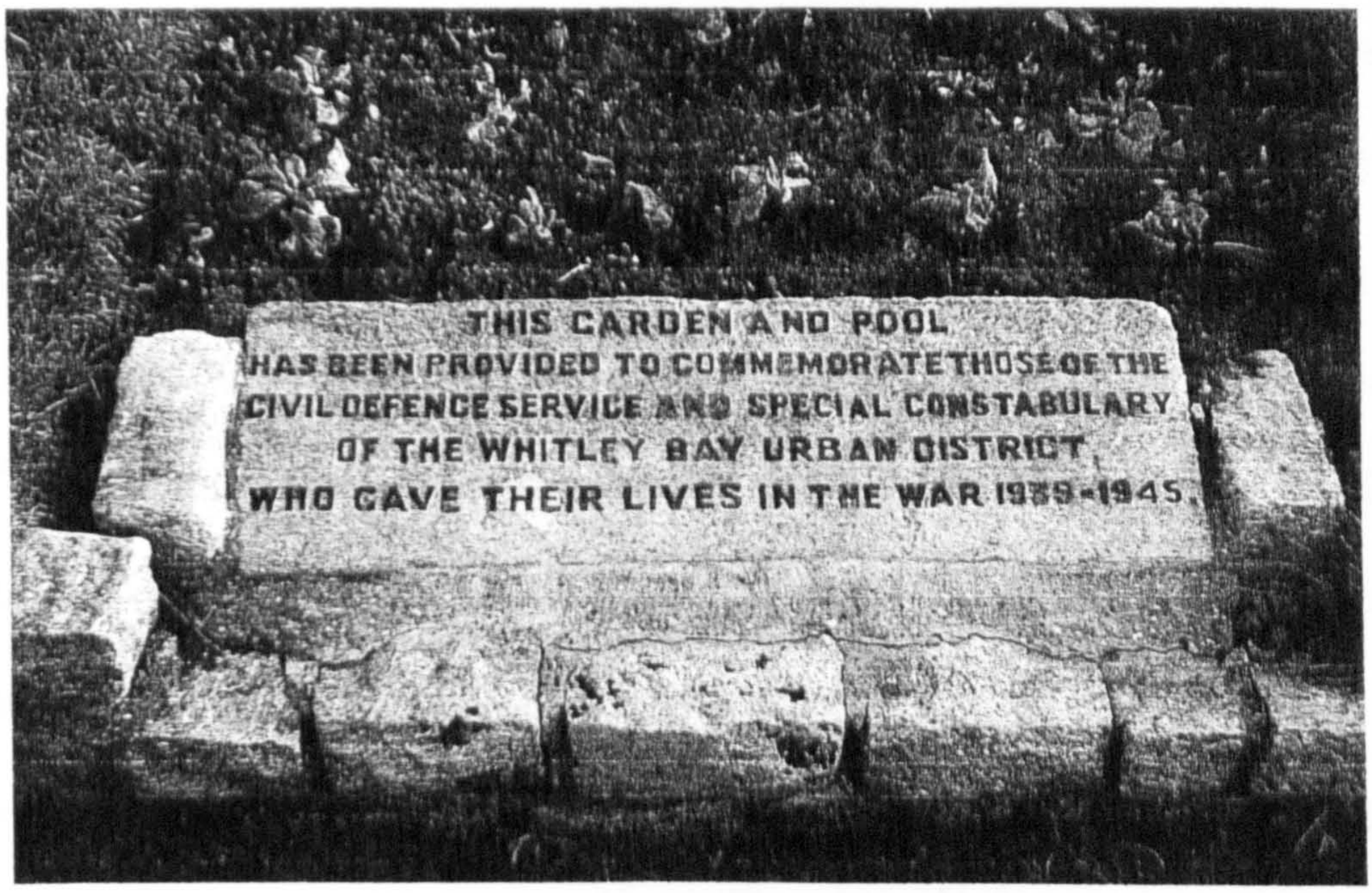

Figure 7. Plaque erected in Whitley Bay to the ARP Services.[492]

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[491] NA: HO 199/400. Report of the Lord Privy Seal into ARP Preparedness. Number 1 Region, July 10th 1939, p 5.

[492] From the author's own collection.

The running of ARP services was a difficult task and could place some people in positions of immense power and influence. As has been seen, the pressures of organising and controlling the area were largely borne by the local councils. Not only did they have to ensure the smooth functioning of civil services and mediate between the major employers of the area but they also had to organise and run an efficient air raid precautions service. In many cases there had been little pre-war preparation for this mammoth task and a range of differing solutions to the problems emerged. The effectiveness of the management of ARP organisations ran the gamut from the efficient to the woefully inadequate. Organisations were created overnight and many of the techniques used to run these services were ad-hoc in nature. In Newcastle it emerged that one of the problems inherent in the ARP organisation was the fact that it had been formed too quickly; a witness, Mrs E Paterson, formerly director of the ARP canteens, testifying before the official inquiry into the city's ARP service stated that the organisation had been "created in a night and built up at a very fast rate."[493] Ironically the ARP Canteens Service in Newcastle was one of the few areas that were praised in the Home Office report, it being said "that the Canteens were very well run, and, having regard to experience elsewhere, it could not be said that the Service in Newcastle suffered from anything but the inevitable defects of an improvised system."[494] This praise however still reflects the general awareness that the ARP Services of Newcastle, in common with most other areas' experiences, were hastily formed and that their efficiency suffered due to this.

The scandal that enveloped the ARP organisation overseen by Newcastle City Council concerned allegations of corruption at the very highest levels of the Council. The concern over the matter led to questions being asked in the House of Commons

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[493] *The Times*, March 25th 1944, p 2.
[494] TWAS: MD/NC/274/5. Newcastle Council Emergency Committee (Civil Defence) minutes, May 12th 1944, p 168.

on February 3rd 1944 and an official delineation of the scope of the Home Office inquiry was given to the house and subsequently reported by Newcastle Council. The inquiry remit was to investigate:

> "the administration by the Council of Newcastle upon Tyne and its Committees and Officers of their functions in relation to the Fire, Police and Civil Defence Services with particular reference to the disposal of fire engine BB.999, the acquisition and use as a fire float of the East Coast Scottish fishing vessel called 'The Premier' and the use of personnel, food, stores and equipment intended for the aforesaid Services."[495]

The subsequent Home Office appointed inquiry, which cost Newcastle city Council approximately £4,018 (£160,720 today),[496] led to the resignations of the ARP Controller, Chief Constable Crawley, and his deputy, Councillor Embleton. The allegations of corruption remained unsubstantiated but the report makes it clear that there had been favouritism and incompetence within the Council and, from the number and nature of the allegations against Councillor Embleton in particular, certainly allegations of corruption were implied. The primary allegations against Councillor Embleton, which were spearheaded by Councillor McKeag, concerned the disposal of ARP equipment involving a business he was directly involved in. One fire engine, BB.999, was disposed of by the Premier Electric Welding Company, the company that Councillor Embleton was closely involved in running.[497] Bought by Councillor Embleton for the sum of £15 (£600 today) it was claimed that the engine was to be replaced with a more modern appliance but the shed that the engine had been stored in remained empty long after its sale. Councillor Embleton claimed that the pump was out of date and unusable but this was contradicted by the evidence. He also claimed that the acquiring company were scrap merchants, a claim that was

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[495] *Ibid*, February 7th 1944, pp 117-118.
[496] *The Times*, May 25th 1944, p 2.
[497] Todd, N, 'Ambition and Harsh Reality', in Ayris, I, *et al*, *Water under the Bridges*, p 98.

proven to be untrue and it was the opinion of the chairman of the investigative committee that Councillor Embleton's answers, both to the committee and to his fellow councillors, "were deliberately misleading and were intended to stave off or stop any further inquiry."[498]

Not only had Councillor Embleton been behind the removal of an important piece of ARP equipment but workers from the Premier Electric Welding Company had also removed a fire pump from the Fire Brigade Headquarters when they were meant to be simply removing rubbish. Councillor Embleton later ordered the men to cut the pump up for scrap. When questioned he claimed that the pump had been taken by accident. The committee refused to accept his defence, as the removal of the pump would have required specialist lifting equipment. This meant, in the words of the committee, that "the property of the corporation was taken without authority and without payment, and the city was deprived of yet another pump, which makes two taken from its resources. The transaction is indefensible."[499]

Yet another allegation concerning fire fighting equipment was levelled regarding Councillor Embleton's role in locating a suitable vessel for use as a fire float on the Tyne. He ensured that his company purchased the vessel and then hired it out to the corporation. It would appear that, in this matter, Councillor Embleton and the ex-Fire Brigade Superintendent, a Mr Chadwick, were in collusion and the inquiry asserted that Councillor Embleton had used knowledge attained through his chairmanship of the Watch Committee to profit his own company. Under cross examination by the inquiry team Councillor Embleton had merely claimed that such allegations were "cruel and unwarrantable". The chairman of the inquiry thought

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[498] *The Times*, March 25th 1944, p 2.
[499] *Ibid.*

otherwise.[500] However, even before he had been called to testify before the inquiry, Councillor Embleton, together with the Town Clerk of the City and others, had protested about the lack of information provided to those who had been subpoenaed about the nature of their questioning and claimed that this had placed themselves and the Corporation in a difficult position.[501]

This was not the full extent of the corruption of Councillor Embleton. A further allegation concerned an arrangement for the stabling of horses that he had reached with Newcastle City Police. Whilst the corporation was renting out stables for £104 per annum (approximately £4,160 today) it appears that Councillor Embleton, in addition to his family and a few select friends, was allowed to stable his horses at the Police Stables, thus they were effectively being kept "for his own use at the public expense."[502] Chief Constable Crawley would appear to not only have known of this arrangement but had failed to regularise the agreement, despite having powers to do so from the Watch Committee.

Concerns had been raised by the Home Secretary that Councillor Embleton should not have been serving as Deputy ARP Controller due to his position as chairman of the Emergency Committee. However, a ballot by the Emergency Committee, in which Councillor Embleton was permitted to vote, resulted in the decision being taken, by five votes to four, that there should be no change. Further to this the decision was also taken that the Home Secreatary should not be informed of the decision to retain Councillor Embleton as both ARP Deputy Controller and chairman of the Emergency Committee. The investigating committee drew the only possible conclusion under the circumstances. That Councillor Embleton was

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[500] *Ibid.*
[501] TWAS: MD/NC/274/5. Newcastle Council Emergency Committee (Civil Defence) minutes, February 14th 1944, pp 119-120.
[502] *The Times*, March 25th 1944, p 2.

intolerant of any criticisms of his actions and that he was in a position of almost absolute control with regard to ARP matters in Newcastle. The members of the Emergency Committee who voted in favour of councillor Embleton were also blamed for attempting to conceal their decision from the Home Secretary.[503]

It appears obvious that Councillor Embleton, despite his work in initially setting up the ARP organisation for Newcastle and his "gallant service during air raids on the city",[504] had not behaved in the manner expected of a man in an influential position during a time of national crisis. Some of the gallant behaviour referred to in the inquiry report was even questioned by members of the local Rescue Service. The Home Office report claimed that Councillor Embleton, in his role as Deputy Controller, "took charge of Rescue and other urgent works" during air raids on the City. This was disputed by rescue workers who claimed that "The Deputy Controller has never in fact during the whole life of the Rescue Service organised or been in charge of Rescue Work at any incident within the City."[505]

Councillor Embleton's behaviour, despite the findings of the official inquiry, would appear to have been at least self-serving, if not corrupt. It is certainly not commensurate with the romantic notion of everyone pulling together for the greater good, during the war. From this example we can see that even during the crisis of war, and the pump removed from Fire Brigade Headquarters was taken in July or August of 1940, the very height of the national crisis, there were some in positions of managerial power who were more than prepared to place their own narrow interests ahead of the community and to behave in a corrupt manner in order to make monetary gains.

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[503] *Ibid.*
[504] *Ibid.*
[505] TWAS: MD/NC/274/5. Newcastle Council Emergency Committee (Civil Defence) minutes, May 15th 1944, p 172.

The response of the Council to the official Home Office report was to accept the resignations of Mr Crawley as ARP Controller, Chief Air Raid Warden and Chief Fire Guard Officer on March 28th, and Councillor Embleton as both Deputy Controller, and from his position as a Councillor, on May 10th.[506] This did not, however, happen without significant discussion and argument within the Emergency Committee. At a special meeting, chaired by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Thompson argued that the positions of both men had become untenable and that they should be removed from their positions immediately, at least pending the publication of the report, when further action could be discussed.[507] This measure was opposed by Councillor Russell, an ex-Lord Mayor of Newcastle who had been found guilty of selling goods at his auction house without the necessary Board of Trade licence; he was fined a sum of £2,000 (£80,000 by today's standards).[508] A vote was taken on Alderman Thompson's motion and this was passed by five votes to three votes. Councillor Russell, whom appears to have been speaking on behalf of Councillor Embleton (he had been asked to leave the committee room whilst the matter was under discussion), subsequently stated that he understood that Councillor Embleton "was now willing to allow himself to be removed."[509] At a meeting held the next day Councillor Russell complained that he had not used the word 'now' in his statement of the previous day and this was removed from the records. Surely this was an attempt to paint Councillor Embleton in a more magnanimous light? In fact Councillor Embleton, who was still sitting on the Committee and was indeed officially still Chairman, did not go quietly. He asked for his "strong protest against

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[506] *The Times*, May 11th 1944, p 2.
[507] TWAS: MD/NC/274/5. Newcastle Council Emergency Committee (Civil Defence) minutes, March 27th 1944, pp 128-129.
[508] *The Times*, May 4th 1943, p 2.
[509] TWAS: MD/NC/274/5. Newcastle Council Emergency Committee (Civil Defence) minutes, March 27th 1944, pp 128-129.

the action which the Committee had taken at this time before the report of the Commissioner was available" to be noted in the official minutes of the meeting.[510] This meeting also heard that the Chief Constable had resigned from his ARP offices permanently and appointed the Town Clerk as temporary ARP Controller.[511]

A letter from the Home Office was read to a special meeting of the council held on May 10th 1944 in which the Home Secretary requested that the Watch Committee consider whether Mr Crawley could continue to serve as Chief Constable. Mr Crawley, who throughout this time had been ill with a very severe jaw abscess, was apparently aware that his position was untenable and subsequently declared his retirement, by letter and by contacting the Lord Mayor, the next day.[512] The former Chief Constable, Mr Crawley was retiring with his full police pension and was thanked by the members of the Watch Committee for his nineteen years of service as Chief Constable of Newcastle City Police. His resignation and retirement resulted in some disquiet amongst Police officers who had been seconded to ARP duties and four men, an Inspector and three Sergeants, who had been working as Assistant Fire Guard Officers requested that they be returned to their Police duties immediately. This request was turned down as it was claimed that they would be impossible to replace at such short notice.[513] The local Labour Movement was, however, delighted by the resignation of the Chief Constable. Mr Crawley had been a larger than life figure who had often rode through the city streets atop a police horse, "in the style of a cavalry

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[510] *Ibid*, March 28th 1944, pp 130-131.
[511] *Ibid.*
[512] TWAS: MD/NC/274/20. Newcastle Council Watch Committee special meeting minutes, May 11th 1944, p 396.
[513] TWAS: MD/NC/274/5. Newcastle Council Emergency Committee (Civil Defence) minutes, April 11th 1944, pp 137-140.

commander", and had ordered baton charges against strikers during the General Strike of 1926.[514]

The Council, after a meeting lasting some three hours, agreed to the formation of a special committee to consider the report and to make recommendations to strengthen the administration of ARP matters.[515] The subsequent recommendations of this special committee were radical and disquieting. They advised that both the Watch Committee and the Civil Defence Emergency Committee should be disbanded forthwith. These committees had very senior members of the Council sitting on them, including four ex-Lord Mayors and the ex-Sheriff of the county. The special committee further advised that the members of those committees should be asked to tender their resignations immediately and that the posts of ARP officer and fireguard officer should be filled as a matter of urgency. The Council, however, when called to vote on these recommendations, rejected them by 30 votes to fourteen votes.[516]

It was agreed that the appointment of both a full time Fire Guard Officer and an ARP Officer, both of whom would be separate from the office of Controller, was essential.[517] By July of 1944 some changes had been made to the methods of overseeing the ARP organisation of Newcastle. A letter from the Town Clerk to the Home Secretary stated that no members of the Emergency Committee now held executive positions in the ARP organisation and that a paid ARP officer and a Fire Guard Officer had both been appointed, at pay rates between £600 and £750 per annum (£24,000-£30,000 today). In addition to this, new methods of keeping track of petrol used by Civil Defence and ARP forces had been introduced, through the

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[514] Todd, N, 'Ambition and Harsh Reality', in Ayris, I, *et al*, *Water under the Bridges*, p 98.
[515] *The Times*, May 11th 1944, p 2.
[516] *The Times*, May 25th 1944, p 2.
[517] TWAS: MD/NC/274/5. Newcastle Council Emergency Committee (Civil Defence) minutes, April 11th 1944, pp 137-140.

appointment of a single officer to oversee this,[518] alongside more thorough accountancy methods concerning the use of stores and equipment.[519] It would appear that, although the Council did take some action, there was only a limited amount of accountability amongst the Councillors. An undercurrent of resentment at the criticism directed towards them permeates the meetings discussing the crisis. Several Councillors wanted the press to be excluded from Council meetings but were outvoted whilst the lack of enthusiasm for the recommendations of the special committee show a reluctance to accept responsibility for the corruption that had been uncovered. The failure to disband either the Watch Committee or the Emergency Committee and to discipline, or force the resignation of, those Councillors who were members of those committees is another example of how some members of the management community could place their own position above that of national requirements and standards of accountability.

The outcome of the inquiry into the Council Committees responsible for ARP in Newcastle showed that not only was their incompetence at high levels of the civic managerial structure but also that there were considerable grounds for suspecting that several highly placed members of the council were guilty of both favouritism and, in some cases, possibly corruption. This is at odds with the accepted view that the wartime situation led to a pulling together of all sections of society and that selfish attitudes were subsumed by the national need. It would appear from the evidence of the Home Office inquiry that there were at least some who wished to continue to profit from there influential positions even at the expense of risking the safety of the City, and indeed the people, they were meant to protect.

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[518] *Ibid*, April 24th 1944, pp 149-154.
[519] *The Times*, July 11th 1944, p 2.

However, the attitude of some of the Councillors of Newcastle was by no means unique and Newcastle was not the only place where allegations of misconduct by senior councillors were made. At South Shields an inquiry was held into the behaviour, during an air raid, of a councillor. It was alleged that Councillor Gompertz had continually pestered the ARP and police services during the air raid on April 25th 1941. He had made repeated phone-calls requesting updates on the Tyne Dock area, despite the fact that the ARP services were at this time stretched to their limit in coping with the raid. It was further alleged that councillor had made use of an ARP vehicle, without permission, to journey down to Tyne Dock. Councillor Gompertz defended himself by claiming that he had not requested the use of the vehicle but had been offered it by a police inspector.[520] An inquiry was launched but no further action appears to have been taken.

Despite these allegations of corruption in the local ARP command structure and the fact that, in some places, individual areas of ARP coverage may have continued to be weak, the ARP services cannot be considered as separate entities, they were by and large an amalgam, a mass of individuals struggling to cope and to develop an efficient form of service in the event that they were required. Indeed the extent of the overall system of air raid precautions on Tyneside can be seen by studying the "75 point plan" of organisation of Newcastle upon Tyne's services. This plan divided the city into three divisions (A, B and C), fifteen depots and 60 sub-depots.[521] Yes there were rivalries and resentments between regular services and the volunteers but it would appear that these existed to a lesser extent than those that developed in other areas of the country, possibly a result of the fact that Tyneside was

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[520] TWAS: T179/338. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), May 5th 1939 – November 25th 1941, ARP Emergency Committee meeting of April 26th 1941, pp 177-182.

[521] The North-East Diary 1939-1945 website, [http://www.swinhope.myby.co.uk/NE-Diary/index.html], 2004.

not seriously tested by sustained bombing. Overall the ARP services on Tyneside coped with what was thrown at them, they could do no more; they had fulfilled their purpose and performed their duties.

Chapter 4

Preparedness for Total War: Civil Defence

The Local Defence Volunteers & Home Guard

Amongst the many myths that have sprung up since the end of the Second World War the image of the Home Guard as inept and doddering old men struggling against the local authorities, as much as the threat of invasion, has proven to be one of the most long lasting. Perpetuated especially by the cult television comedy, '*Dad's Army*', this myth has become the accepted account of the organisation in the popular memory. It is certainly true that some aspects of the popular myth were present in the historical reality. In the words of George MacDonald Fraser, himself an infantryman in Burma during the war, "anyone who supposes that Captain Mainwaring of Dad's Army is a latter-day caricature can rest assured that Mainwaring was there".[522]

The common historical view of the Local Defence Volunteers and Home Guard was that of a disorganised, under-equipped, badly-led group that was incompetent in the execution of its duties. Very few academic accounts have been written about the organisation. Most accounts of the group are concerned solely with regional units and appeared shortly after the war. One recent book on British wartime society dedicates only four pages to the subject, whilst Angus Calder covers the organisation in fewer than 30 pages.[523] In recent years, however, some historians have attempted to refute the accepted view of incompetent and irrelevant

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[522] Macdonald Fraser, G, *The Hollywood History of the World* (London: Joseph, 1988), p232.
[523] Calder, A, *The People's War*, pp 121-128, 151-152, 156, 200, 215, 268-269, 322, 340-345, and 563-564.

marginalisation.[524] These historians have looked at the positive elements of the force such as the contribution they made to relieving regular forces from tedious and time-consuming duties. The social benefits of service in the Home Guard have been cited in recent works, with the sense of belonging and the absorption of procedural and management skills being a benefit to many men in post-war life.[525] As well as this, there have been attempts to analyse the force as a social microcosm of British (masculine and civilian) society of the wartime period.[526] Undoubtedly the social and cultural aspects of the Home Guard would benefit from further in-depth study.

It would appear that, at least on Tyneside, the force was quickly and efficiently organised and that it went from strength-to-strength. As the war continued, the accepted roles of the Home Guard changed in response to the altering situation and the force not only appears to have improved its levels of expertise but also to have shown a large degree of adaptability in its approach to training for, and performing, duties as diverse as anti-aircraft rocket operation and traffic management. The usefulness of the organisation in relieving other, regular, forces cannot be underestimated as it allowed the regular troops to concentrate on training and re-arming, whilst the volunteers took over duties such as guarding vulnerable areas and manning roadblocks.

Whilst some historians have attempted to refute the popular interpretation of the Home Guard others have attempted to explain away the force as a propaganda device: a "vehicle by which the [British] government could promote the myth of a

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[524] See, MacKenzie, S P, *The Home Guard: A Military and Political History* (Oxford University Press, 1995) and, Carroll, D, *Dad's Army: the Home Guard 1939-1945* (London: Sutton, 2002).
[525] Mackay, R, *Half the Battle. Civilian morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp 259-260.
[526] Rose, S O, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp 151-197.

unified Britain standing firm against Nazi aggression".[527] Such supposed mythologizing was primarily for the benefit of the American government as a means of showing that Britain was willing to continue the fight despite the fall of Europe.[528] Others have seen the failings of the Home Guard as being the fault of government failure to back the force in a meaningful way by providing sufficient equipment, weaponry and training.[529] Many of the tributes paid to Tyneside Home Guard units at the end of the war seem to refute this belief. In the documentary sources now available, the force is portrayed largely as an effective and reasonably well-organised body of men.

David Yelton has raised some interesting points regarding the weaknesses of the 'propaganda tool' argument.[530] He points out that the force was retained until late in 1944 as a militarily useful organisation that provided indispensable aid to the Regular Army and to the ARP services. Ironically, the contribution of the Home Guard increased as the war went on and as the danger of invasion, for the resistance of which the force was originally assembled, shrank. The size of the force remained significant and despite the introduction of mandatory service later in the war the efficiency of the force seems to have increased as training became more refined and equipment more readily available.

Undoubtedly, the formation of the LDV, which was later renamed the Home Guard during the summer of 1940 on the instructions of Churchill (who sought to give the force a more dynamic title), in 1940 was heavily influenced by the belief that the existence of such a force would serve to calm public fears of a German invasion and

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[527] Yelton, D K, 'British Public Opinion, the Home Guard, and the Defense of Great Britain, 1940-1944', *The Journal of Military History*, 58, 3 (July 1994), pp 461-480.
[528] For an example of this argument see Collier, B, *The Defence of the United Kingdom* (London, HMSO, 1957).
[529] See Longmate, N, *The Real Dad's Army: The Story of the Home Guard* (London: Hutchison, 1974).
[530] Yelton, D K, 'British Public Opinion', p 462.

the threat from Fifth Columnists. It is equally obvious that some prominent members of the government, most notably Winston Churchill, believed that the force should be capable of acting in a military sense and that its creation was seen as more than simply a publicity sop to allay the fears of the general public over the invasion threat.[531] Churchill remained a most fervent supporter of the force, playing, as it did, to his sense of patriotic history.

A further accusation commonly levelled at the LDV/Home Guard concerned its somewhat erratic relationship with the general public. There are many easily available and familiar examples of members of the public being stopped and questioned by overly officious Home Guardsmen. There are also the often quoted examples of Home Guardsmen killing or injuring innocents by opening fire when their challenges were not heeded, or else by accident. The harassing of motorists, ARP workers, officers of the local constabulary and even the Regular Armed Forces was a commonplace complaint during the early months of the force's existence.[532]

Mistakes were bound to occur in the culture of suspicion and fear that was prevalent during the invasion scare of 1940. Rumours ran rife about the capabilities and numbers of German paratroopers and the scale of threat from the suspected Fifth Column. These prevailing conditions, when combined with the inadequate training and guidance that was offered to the LDV, were bound to result in some tragic incidents occurring. Unfortunately, the nature and scale of these incidents was prone to be exaggerated on both a local and national scale. The very fact that by the end of the war the Home Guard had become a highly regarded organisation is evidence that the criticisms that have been made were putatively not wholly shared by the general public, the government or indeed the regular army. On Tyneside, the stand down

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[531] NA: WO 193/20. Suggestions for formation of irregular units and Home Guard, 1939-1942.
[532] Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 127. Also, see MacKenzie, S P, *The Home Guard*, pp 57-61.

parades of the Home Guard units were well-attended and attracted considerable positive newspaper coverage showing the regard in which the force was held despite, the disgruntlement of some guardsmen who believed that the force was being disbanded prematurely.[533]

The Formation of the LDV/Home Guard

After the initial expectation of a devastating blow from the massed ranks of the Luftwaffe failed to materialise upon the declaration of war in 1939 some thought went on in official circles, as well as much more public debate, as to how Germany intended to defeat Britain. Intelligence reports from a very early stage in the war seemed to speculate that Germany was planning a combined seaborne and airborne assault on Britain.[534] From the beginning, Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, was enthusiastic about the forming of a volunteer home defence force in order to oppose any invasion alongside the regular forces.[535] On October 8th 1939 he wrote to the Lord Privy Seal asking "Why do we not form a Home Guard of half-a-million men over forty (if they like to volunteer) and put all our elder stars at the head and in the structure of these new formations...and I am assured there are plenty of rifles at any rate."[536]

The rapid fall in 1940 of Norway followed by France and the Low Countries led to a situation of increasing desperation and hysteria within Britain. More worryingly the part played by parachute troops and enemy agents, the so-called threat

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[533] *The Shields Evening News*, December 4th 1944.
[534] NA: WO 190/879 appendix A (MI3 minute), November 1st 1939.
[535] NA: WO 193/20. Suggestions for formation of irregular units and Home Guard, 1939-1942.
[536] MacKenzie, S P, *The Home Guard*, p 19.

of the Fifth Column, in the German successes was highlighted and given perhaps undue attention by all sections of the media. The situation led the Ministry of Information to report in May 1940 that there were extensive public fears over the existence in Britain of a Fifth Column.[537] The higher circles of central government were also concerned about the risk represented by these Fifth Columnists; the Chiefs of Staff presented a paper to the cabinet in May 1940 urging stern action against anyone suspected of being a traitor. It was during this period that some of the more well known myths of the war started to gain credence with the general public, that German paratroopers in Holland had descended disguised as nuns or priests and so on.

Newspaper columns became clogged with demands for the formation of a voluntary force to oppose both the threat of paratroops and the more invidious threat from within the country. Some of the clamour for the formation of a force was bordering on the hysterical. In one such article, the author inquired whether plans would be made to train golfers in rifle shooting so that they could deal with stray parachutists. Some members of the public began to take matters into their own hands and formed unofficial units armed with shotguns and other makeshift weaponry. The British Legion even formulated its own plans for the creation of Local Defence Rifle Units to oppose any attempted enemy landing. All of this was of course in addition to the bringing up to strength of the Territorial Army units and in this respect, Tyneside proved to be enthusiastic. Newcastle upon Tyne was the first city in Great Britain to bring every Territorial unit within its boundaries to double, wartime, strength.[538] In addition, Northumberland became the first county in England to attain this

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[537] NA: INF 1/264. Public Opinion on the Present Crisis, May 30th 1940.
[538] *The Times*, May 22nd 1939, p 20.

distinction.[539] This was not surprising given the area's long and proud military tradition.

On May 14th 1940 the British government gave in to these demands and Anthony Eden addressed the nation to ask for volunteers to form the Local Defence Volunteers force. When Anthony Eden, on May 14th 1940, during his first speech to the nation as Secretary of State for War, called for "large numbers of such men in Great Britain who are British subjects, between the ages of seventeen and 65, to come forward now and offer their services",[540] he was following a grand English tradition for establishing voluntary military forces. Throughout the nation's history, characterised by small standing armies, these militias have often proven to be militarily important. This tradition can be traced back to the voluntary militia units formed after the defeat of the British fleet by the French off Beachy Head in 1690 and continued over the centuries and throughout the First World War.[541]

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[539] *Ibid.*

[540] Eden, A, *Freedom and Order: Selected Speeches 1939-1946 2nd ed* (New York, 1971), pp 71-73.

[541] A century after this the Home Secretary of the time, Henry Dundas, found himself bombarded with applications from ordinary subjects, mostly on the South coast, demanding the right to form local defence forces to protect against any attempted French landing. The volunteers also stated concerns about any Jacobin-inspired subversion from within the country as a principle motive for the formation of the volunteer forces. During the early years of the Napoleonic conflict volunteers were raised officially and with high levels of enthusiasm, by early 1804 the number of volunteers stood at around three hundred and fifty thousand men. The official enthusiasm for these volunteer units faded after the initial concerns about French invasion had waned. Public and official confidence in such forces was further eroded due to the part played by the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry during the Peterloo massacre of 1819. This lack of confidence is reflected by the fact that during the Chartist protests of the 1840's demands, from certain wealthy sections of society, for the re-formation of volunteer bands were ignored by the Home Office as it concluded that the associated risks were by far greater than any benefits that could be gained from such a move.

During World War One public anxiety regarding a possible attempt by German forces to land on the East coast of England, exploiting the absence in France of the British Expeditionary Force, led to demands for a voluntary military force to be raised. This call was quickly taken up by various national and local figures, including the authors H G Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle. Letters appeared in various national papers in support of this argument as early as two days into the war. Despite official opposition from the War Office, and Lord Kitchener in particular, the Volunteer Training Corps was acknowledged in November 1914. Any male who was ineligible for enrolment in either the Regular or Territorial Army could enrol in the VTC. There was no provision of clothing, arms or equipment and service was entirely voluntary at this stage. 1916 saw more official recognition of the contribution of the VTC, uniforms were doled out and an Act put through parliament ensured that service in the VTC was for the duration of the war. Despite this, by 1918 public enthusiasm had waned considerably and the end of the war saw the beginning of the end for the VTC although official disbandment of the organisation did not come into effect until 1920.

Any men who were willing to serve in this force were asked to give their name and address to their local police station and await further contact. It was inevitable in the atmosphere of fear and suspicion that some would take matters a step further. Indeed some volunteers were organising their own patrols from the very night after Eden's announcement.[542] The overall reaction to the call for volunteers was astounding, and completely unexpected by the government, in its scale. Within 24 hours of the initial broadcast there were over 250,000 men who had put their names down.[543]

This was especially true of the men of Tyneside: large queues had formed at local police stations within "a remarkable short space of time".[544] Newcastle City Police reported that the first volunteer "walked in four minutes after the broadcast" and that he was the "first of a steady stream".[545] By midnight after the call for volunteers had been heard there were 464 names taken by the police at North Shields' Central police station. By the following day the number had increased to over seven hundred and by the 18th of May the number had risen to nine hundred and seventy nine. For an area the size of North Shields and Tynemouth this would represent a substantial proportion of the eligible population. Indeed, it was said that it was "extremely doubtful whether any town of similar size can equal it."[546] The men were from all walks of life and counted amongst their number retired ex-servicemen, professionals, businessmen, shipyard workers, and labourers.

The extremely large numbers of those who wished to volunteer for the new force caused problems for employers, especially those who were engaged upon work

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[542] MacKenzie, S P, *The Home Guard*, p 34.
[543] NA: HO 45/18523. Formation of Local Defence Volunteers: applications, relations with police and defence against parachutists, 1940.
[544] *The Shields Evening News*, November 15th 1944, p 3.
[545] *The Times*, May 15th 1940, p 6.
[546] *The Shields Evening News*, November 15th 1944, p 3.

of importance to the war effort. In mid-May 1940 the Deputy Divisional Food Officer, Mr W T Rainbow, was compelled to write to the Chief Constable, in his capacity as ARP Controller for Newcastle upon Tyne, seeking clarification over Ministry of Food employees who wished to undertake duties in the LDV. A number of employees who had served in the First World War wished to volunteer but there were concerns over the interference that this might cause to the operations of the Ministry of Food. The Chief Constable replied saying that, of course, all employees should consult with their superiors before commencing their new duties as part of the LDV.[547]

One way of getting around the problem of losing workers to Home Guard duties was to form units that were based at the workplace. This proved to be a popular measure and many such units quickly formed. In Newcastle alone workplace units were formed at some 28 locations. These ranged from a squad formed from workers at the BBC to a larger unit formed to guard the LNER Forth Goods Yard and units at each of the three major Vickers Armstrong sites at Elswick, Scotswood and the Naval Yard. A company was also raised from workers at Redheads Shipyard at South Shields.[548] The Newcastle Corporation Fire Brigade formed an LDV section armed with six rifles or shotguns in August 1940 to protect their own premises whilst a separate company comprised of workers at the city's brewery mounted a machine gun on the water tower at the brewery site.[549] The forming of Home Guard units was

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[547] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35, Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files re: Home Guard 1940-1942. Letter from Mr W T Rainbow (Deputy Divisional Food Officer) to F J Crawley (Chief Constable and ARP Controller), May 15th 1940.
[548] TWAS: 1061/1470-1472. LDV, Redheads Shipyard. Enrolment forms, name lists, ID cards, etc.
[549] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files: re Home Guard 1940-1945, letter from the Lieutenant Colonel (Secretary), August 6th 1940.

not restricted to the major industrial concerns of the area with units also performing their duties at the Co-Op in Newgate Street and Mitchell Bearings in Benwell.[550]

Whilst this method of organisation was more convenient for the employers concerned (indeed, it provided a free night-watchman service) it did represent several problems for both the overall Home Guard command structure and the local police force. Many of the workplace units operated outside of the main command structure and it was not until 1941 that they were re-organised so that they fell within the overall command structure of the Home Guard. In North Shields, for example, the company formed by Smiths Dock Ltd and the Tyne Improvement Commissioners was not amalgamated with the Tynemouth Battalion until September 1941 at which time it formed a new company (D) in that organisation and was tasked with guarding the riverside area from North Shields Fish Quay to Howdon.[551] The patrolling of workplaces by independent units also led to incidents with the police and as early as 1940 a warning was given to local police officers to exercise the utmost caution when they were carrying out inspections of premises which had self contained Home Guard units, especially after dark.[552] Presumably this was due to the possibility of the Home Guard unit believing that police officers were in fact infiltrators or members of the suspected Fifth Column.

The early members of the LDV had many varying reasons for volunteering their services to the organisation. For some there was the obvious fear of a German invasion and the impact that this would have upon their loved ones. For these volunteers the reason was simple: they wished to do everything in their power to safeguard their families. It is clear from the literature that has built up around the

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[550] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files re: Home Guard 1940-1942. Official list of works with established Home Guard units, September 6th 1940.
[551] *The Shields Evening News*, December 12th 1944, p 3.
[552] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files re: Home Guard 1940-1942. Memo from Chief Constable, September 6th 1940.

LDV and Home Guard that patriotism played a substantial part in convincing many of the men to volunteer. Feelings of vulnerability also played a role and also partially explained the allure of the LDV when compared to the ARP Services. Whilst the man in the street felt powerless to stop a German bomber from attacking his country and threatening his family, he realised that he could fight back against an invasion. Indeed, when combined with feelings of patriotism, it became his masculine duty to do so.

There were a number of other, sometimes less laudable, reasons for some men volunteering for service. Wartime British society placed a great deal of store in traditional masculine roles and this pressure could explain the urgency of some of the volunteers to be taken seriously. The war led to a change in the perception of what it meant to be a British male. Recently, some historians have described the process as a slide into "hyper-masculinity".[553] The hegemonic male caricature was physically powerful, handsome and young. Of course this left out a great number of men who, for various reasons, did not fit into this stereotype but who wished to be seen to be doing their duty to their country in its time of need.

Of course it was not only preconceived notions of masculinity that were challenged by the formation of the Home Guard and other civil defence organisations. Many women throughout the country wished to play a more active role in opposition to any invading force. Despite the desperation of the prevailing situation in the first three years of the war, when invasion seemed most likely, the official governmental attitude towards female volunteers in the Home Guard remained obstinately hostile. The general attitude of the government was based on assumptions about gender which had applied to women during previous conflicts. However, the totality of the Second

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[553] Rose, S O, *Which People's War*, p 181-182.

World War, and the threat presented to all sections of British society, resulted in a disruption of the traditional distinctions that separated combatants from non-combatants with a subsequent blurring of the boundaries that had traditionally separated the "gendering of conflict".[554]

Summerfield and Peniston-Bird argue that the Home Guard was unique in that it "resisted the recruitment of women, in respect of both its structure and its symbolic status".[555] They do, however, go on to outline various exceptions to this rule. In this respect the 7th Tynemouth Battalion of the Northumberland Home Guard would seem to be a very definite case to the contrary as, from the unit's inception, a woman was enrolled as an unofficial auxiliary member. Miss Muriel Venus was the borough's only female Home Guard and had offered support services to the battalion from the first. Although it was only in 1942 that she was officially appointed as an auxiliary member and was granted permission to wear an arm badge bearing the letters H.G. This would appear to have been an officially recognised position but if so it contradicts the assertion that "from 1940 to 1943 (the period of greatest invasion danger), it [The Home Guard] made no official arrangements to enlist the help of female auxiliaries."[556] Although Miss Venus was a member of the organisation she played no part in any combat activity or training and instead aided in passing messages and preparing meals for the battalion's officers,[557] both being traditionally acceptable feminine roles during wartime. Despite this, she was viewed as a part of the unit and was not merely a tea-lady. The lack of a combat role is in keeping with the service of females in the regular armed forces of the period. The only arm where

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[554] Summerfield, P & Peniston-Bird, C, 'Women in the Firing Line: the Home Guard and the defence of gender boundaries in Britain in the Second World War', *Women's History Review*, 9, 2, (2000), p 231.
[555] *Ibid*, p 232.
[556] *Ibid.*
[557] *The Shields Evening News*, December 21st 1944, p 3.

women were allowed in a combat role was in the mixed anti-aircraft units, and, even here, they were not permitted to actually fire weapons. Of course women did play an active, and dangerous, role in various espionage organisations.

The reluctance of the Home Guard in accepting female recruits resulted in questions being asked by female Members of Parliament and the issue rapidly assumed national proportions. Surely, it was argued, if women were on the front line in this war, as they unarguably were, then it was only fair that they should be entitled, alongside the men of the country, to join an organisation designed as a last-ditch defence?[558] Indeed Churchill was in favour of letting women play an active role in combat and supported the principle of women in the Home Guard. He also pushed for more women to be involved in anti-aircraft batteries. Despite this, the call for women to be allowed to become combat trained members of the Home Guard was ridiculed by leading politicians and the masculine hegemony of the defence of the realm continued. By April 1943 women were being allowed to join the Home Guard but only as Women Home Guard Auxiliaries with non-combatant roles such as clerical duties.[559] On no account were they to be given weapons training or to participate in combat exercises, their function was solely "to perform non-combatant duties such as clerical work, cooking and driving".[560] The truth, however, is probably that the numbers of women who wished to join the Home Guard were small. Unmarried women became subject to conscription whilst it is unlikely that many married women would have wished to join a combat arm.

On Tyneside, an area already synonymous with high levels of military service, there was a large body of ex-servicemen who were now past the age when they would

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[558] For the political debate on the subject see, Summerfield, P & Peniston-Bird, C, 'Women in the Firing Line', pp 233-238.
[559] *Ibid*, p 238.
[560] Hansard, v 338, col 1532, oral answers, P J Grigg, April 20th 1943, quoted in *ibid*.

be accepted for active military service. These men formed the basis of the more experienced cadre of the local Home Guard units. The area also included a great number of industries vital to the national war effort and, because of this, a large number of men who were employed in reserved occupations. A large proportion of these men were willing to volunteer their services and they quickly became a mainstay of the service. Their reasons for volunteering to take on sometimes arduous duties on top of their extended working day can be found in common feelings of patriotism as well as fellowship with their colleagues. As the wartime situation became more desperate, however, another reason became increasingly common. A substantial aspect of the wartime masculine dominion involved uniformed service and whilst the campaign of ostracism of those who were not in uniform never reached the pitch that it had in the First World War it remained a looming ever-present aspect of British society. As such, many of those men who were young enough to be accepted for active service but who occupied reserved positions found themselves, if not shunned then, being looked on askance by some sections of society, especially by some women. This does seem to have been more of an issue in the Midlands,[561] with letters to the press castigating young reserved workers as cowards and shirkers,[562]than it was on Tyneside. This can perhaps be explained by the hardships that the local workforce had gone through in the decade prior to the war.

Although many of the men who volunteered for service in the Home Guard were veterans of the First World War, the proportion of older volunteers was not as high as is popularly imagined. It has been estimated that the veterans made up approximately 35% of the original volunteers for the LDV. The command structure of the force was made up of a more significant number of veterans, many of whom

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[561] Rose, S O, *Which People's War*, pp 178-196.
[562] *Ibid*, pp 179-180.

were ex-officers in the Regular Army. The veterans were joined by a large number of younger men who were waiting to be called up for service in the regular forces or who were working in reserved occupations. By 1940 the average age of the LDV/Home Guard was estimated to be approximately 35 years, much younger than the myth perpetuated by the images of 'Dads' Army'.[563]

Figure 8. Gosforth Home Guard unit, 21st April 1941.[564]

The pace of events sometimes led to a breakdown in communication with the result that the signing up of men did not go as smoothly as many of the volunteers, or the controlling authorities, would have wished. The greatest problem was that many of the local police stations had not been warned to expect the flood of volunteers that would soon arrive at their door. This led to various haphazard methods of the taking of particulars and caused some levels of confusion when it came to approaching men at a later date for the purposes of official enrolment. As the police fulfilled such a critical role in the enrolment of volunteers the failure to notify many stations of their role was a major oversight on the part of both central and local government. At North

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[563] MacKenzie, S P, *The Home Guard*, pp 36-40.
[564] Photo © of Newcastle Chronicle and Journal Ltd.

Shields, where the situation was typical of many areas, the police had received no warning of their expected role in the matter and so names were listed on scraps of paper until a more efficient records system could be organised. The police seem to have adjusted to this role in a very speedy and efficient manner, at North Shields the scraps of paper were replaced with a very comprehensive alphabetical system within 48 hours.[565] The local police were said to have been "extremely helpful"[566] at this stage in the formation of the LDV. Indeed they earned the praises of the LDV Group Commander for the role that they played in these early and disorganised days; Colonel Holmes stated that, "[The police] Played an invaluable part in building up the nucleus from which we were able to build the battalion."[567]

The country was divided into zones and each zone was then further sub-divided into different area groups. Each zone had an overall Zone Commander. In the case of Northumberland the Zone Commander was Lord Allendale. The holder of this position was responsible for the planning and organisation of the LDV within the entire purview of his command. This appointment of a local worthy was a common occurrence in the Home Guard and an issue that caused much controversy. The high command ranks of the force were dominated by the upper classes, thus giving rise to the popular belief of the Home Guard being led by Colonel Blimp type personalities. Looking at the issue purely in terms of social class it is true to say that the force was led by those who came from the upper echelons of society. This was for a variety of reasons, the role played by these men was largely administrative and as such they had the time for these tasks, the local commanders had to be well known and to an extent respected even if this was purely because of the respect for their social rank. Members of the aristocracy and gentry were also far more likely to have seen military

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[565] *The Shields Evening News*, November 15th 1944.
[566] *Ibid.*
[567] *Ibid.*

service when they were younger. Whilst this command structure did lead to a degree of tactical stagnation and grasp of the military situation there were also positive results. As influential members of local society, and in some cases national society, the commanders were capable of getting quicker results from local and central authorities on behalf of their rank and file and the organisation as a whole.[568] Perhaps one of the greatest triumphs of the Home Guard was that it helped to break down traditional British class barriers. The Guardsmen came from all walks of life and generally co-operated well with each other when performing their duties.

Although, on a national level, the Home Guard has been derided because of a perceived lack of organisation there is little evidence to suggest this in the case of the Northumberland Zone organisations. The police had coped adequately with the high demands placed upon them to take names and addresses of volunteers and these seem to have been passed on to the relevant LDV authorities in a short space of time. In Newcastle, a letter from Lord Allendale, the Zone Commander, requesting that the details of volunteers be submitted to the Newcastle Group Commander, Colonel E F Bell, was received by the Chief Constable on May 18th 1940, only four days after the initial request for volunteers had gone out.[569] Whilst at Tynemouth the Group Commander was appointed by the 17th of May and the first company of LDV were appointed by that weekend.[570] The formation of small company sized units of LDV took place at speed. By June 1940 there were four infantry companies, plus a separate headquarters company, in Newcastle. These companies were dispersed around the

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[568] *Ibid*, pp 71-81.
[569] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files: re Home Guard 1940-1945, letter from Lord Allendale to Chief Constable Crawley (ARP Controller), May 18th 1940.
[570] *The Shields Evening News*, November 15th 1944.

city to give good levels of patrol coverage and were, like most LDV units, based in disused drill halls and schools.[571]

The most common criticism of the force was that it was not militarily viable. Critics argue that the organisation could not have fought off a German invasion if this had proven necessary. This is missing the point of the original formation of the LDV. The force was not intended to replace the Regular Army; it was an addition originally intended to act as a form of armed lookout. The only fighting role originally envisaged was that of a brief holding action whilst regular forces were transported to the area. The other most common duty associated with the LDV was that of patrolling and guarding sensitive locations. In this aspect of their duty the force served to relieve regular forces of this time consuming and inefficient duty.

The reasons for the mockery of the Home Guard largely stem from circumstances that were beyond the control of the force's members – the lack of equipment being the greatest criticism. Britain had already experienced a great defeat in the fall of France and its army had lost a large percentage of not only its heavy equipment but also of such fundamental items such as rifles, uniforms and so on. Hence, newly-produced items would be required merely to re-equip the regular forces and there was a severe shortage of any surplus that could be set aside for the use of the Home Guard. This led to the reports of units patrolling and mounting guard armed with cudgels, muskets and in some cases farming tools. Tynemouth LDV, upon its initial formation, was reported to have had only one shotgun between its one hundred members.[572] This lack of equipment did not only apply to firearms but also to uniforms, boots and other necessary military equipment. The Home Guard officers were speedily issued with an identification placard for display in their car windscreens

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[571] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files: re Home Guard 1940-1945, Secret document from LDV Group Commander (Newcastle) to Chief Constable, June 8th 1940.
[572] *The Shields Evening News*, November 15th 1944.

in the event of an emergency however.[573] The initial volunteers received only an armband emblazoned with the initials LDV to be sewn onto a sleeve, so as to conform to the rules of war,[574] in lieu of the issue of a uniform. This, despite the risk of being shot as franc-tireurs (non-uniformed and illegal combatants) in the event of an invasion, did not deter the members of the LDV from continuing their activities in a stoical and steadfast manner.

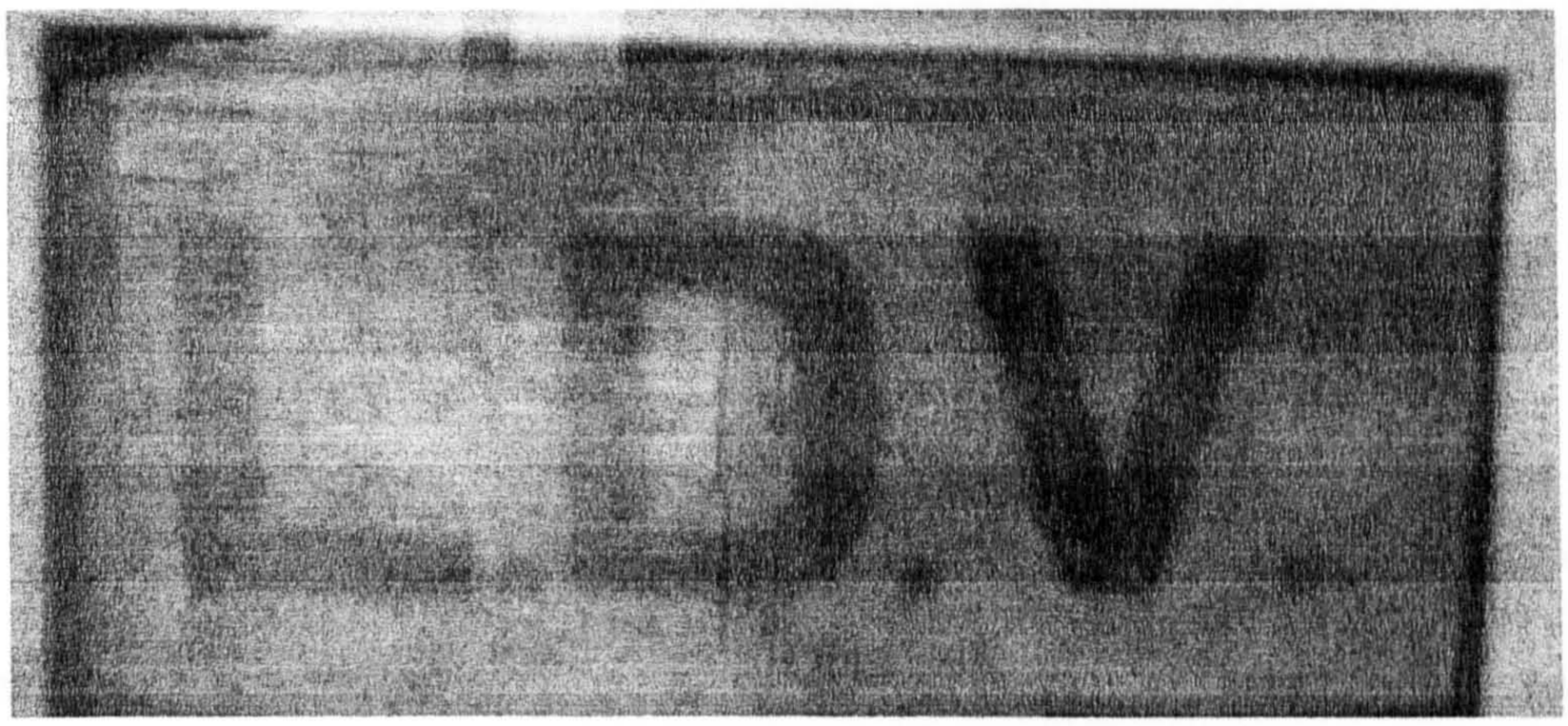

Figure 9. An early war LDV armlet, worn around the sleeve of a civilian jacket.[575]

The LDV command structure responded to this crisis in the admirable manner to which they responded to most crises during the war; they relied upon their own initiative. In the above case of Tynemouth LDV the Group Commander, Colonel Holmes, quickly ascertained that there was a small stock of First World War issue Mills Bombs (hand grenades) in a Newcastle drill hall. He then applied for and received permission from the Territorial Army to have approximately one gross of these delivered to the local police station for re-issue to his unit so that at least his

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[573] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files: re Home Guard 1940-1945, Memo from W R Wingfield (Regional Police Staff Officer) to Chief Constables, June 11th 1940.
[574] *The Shields Evening News*, November 15th 1944.
[575] From the author's own collection. Original in the Military Vehicle Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.

force would have some offensive power in the event of invasion.[576] In Newcastle the Group Commander petitioned the local police force for any spare revolvers or rifles that they had to be transferred to his own unit.[577] The government initially launched an appeal for the donation of any privately owned sporting rifles or shotguns for the use of the LDV units. These weapons, however, were not ideal for military use as there were problems finding adequate supplies of ammunition. Once again the police were to play a role as the weapons were to be handed in to local police stations in order that the police could organise the distribution of the weaponry to local LDV units. There is evidence suggesting that on Tyneside the police did not welcome the extra responsibility of storing weapons and that this led to an increase in tension between the police and the LDV.[578]

Whilst the police and, after some initial enthusiasm, the government, decided that the donated shotguns were not suitable, the LDV were enthusiastic about the possibility of gaining the use of any extra weaponry, thus showing once again the levels of individual initiative that was commonly displayed by members of the LDV. The example of Newcastle LDV shows that the volunteers of the civil defence organisations often disagreed with the opinions of the local authorities and the local police force, especially over the issue of the role and equipping of the LDV.[579]

The lack of suitable weaponry led to a loud and sustained campaign of protest from within the more influential ranks of the LDV. This willingness to protest at perceived unfair treatment was a feature of the organisation throughout the war. After the initial boost of mobilisation had begun to wear off the volunteers turned their

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[576] *Ibid.*
[577] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files: re Home Guard 1940-1945, Memo to the Chief Constable from LDV Group Commander (Newcastle), June 19th 1940.
[578] *Ibid.* Memo and newspaper report regarding the storing of shotguns at West End Police Station, August 11th 1940.
[579] *Ibid.* Reply to above letter, August 30th 1940.

attention towards the perceived lack of governmental action towards equipping the force in order to make it anything other than a token. The fact that the equipping of the LDV and Home Guard proceeded at a monotonously slow pace did nothing to alleviate some members' fears that the force was not widely regarded by the authorities. The government did order large numbers of pre-war weapons, Ross rifles from storage in Canada, and Springfield's from America, in order to provide armament for the LDV. The first batch of these weapons was delivered and issued in late June 1940 but despite this it was estimated that only one man in six had a firearm.[580] Patrols and roadblocks manned by LDV men armed with a variety of pistols, shotguns, outdated rifles, and even clubs, were a common site across Tyneside during this period.

The challenge of securing armaments for the Home Guard only improved gradually throughout the course of the war. The organisation remained a test-bed for ad-hoc weapons systems, such as the Northover Projector and the Spigot Mortar (otherwise known as the Blacker Bombard), and a dumping ground for obsolescent or totally obsolete weaponry that was no longer required by the Regular Army. As this re-equipping coincided with the receding possibility of any German invasion it was accepted by the rank and file of the Home Guard, despite some persistent grumbling from members who wished to be incorporated into the main body of the Regular Army.

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[580] MacKenzie, S P, *The Home Guard*, p 40.

The Home Guard in Operation

The training of Guardsmen was yet another factor that aroused derision amongst the more cynical members of the populace and amongst some historians. This is unfair. At the founding of the force there was indeed little planning or forethought put into the training programmes that would be necessary if the service was to fulfil its role in any meaningful way. Training centres, both locally and nationally, were established with commendable speed and efficiency. Even in the issue of training there was some confusion over the role that the service was to undertake in the event of an emergency. Some of the more left wing volunteers, influenced by the lessons of the Spanish Civil War, believed that the most effective method of fighting for the Home Guard was to practice guerrilla tactics. This led to the classes in "un-gentlemanly warfare" overseen by Tom Wintringham, former commander of the British Battalion of the International Brigade, at Osterley Park.[581] These early schools were later taken over by the authorities and the training programme became more staid but also more organised, involving the employment of instructors from the Regular Army. The Regular Army also assisted by its use of travelling "K" Wing units. These were instructors who travelled round Home Guard units giving lectures and organising small-scale exercises.[582]

Training at a more local level was left largely in the hands of the local command structure and consisted of regular target practice, annual and weekend training camps, as well as official informative displays and regular exercises.[583] The training procedure on Tyneside would appear to have been well organised and efficiently run. From November 1940 the platoon and section commanders of the 7th

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[581] *Ibid*, pp 70-71.
[582] *The Shields Evening News*, December 21st 1944, p 3.
[583] *Ibid*, December 28th 1944, p 6.

Battalion (Tynemouth) Northumberland Home Guard were required to attend weekend courses in Newcastle.[584] Rifle ranges were quickly organised, often in quarries or on farmland, and were extensively used by local units of Home Guard who were anxious to improve their standards of marksmanship.[585] Problems of testing some of the larger and more experimental weapons could still prove to be somewhat problematic and even dangerous. In the summer of 1941 the testing of a Northover Projector (a simple, and cheap, anti-tank weapon which fired a bottle containing a phosphorous solution.) at Tynemouth Castle led to the ignition of some nearby gorse bushes and necessitated the calling out of the local fire brigade.[586] As more of the younger members of the force were called up for regular service it was reported that the training they had already received during their period of Home Guard service had proven useful. This is another example of the contribution the Home Guard made to the general war effort, often coincidentally – a contribution that was not envisaged upon the creation of the force.[587]

Ironically the Home Guard became more efficient as a military force as its original raison-d'être became less necessary. Access to equipment, especially ammunition, and better training methods led to a significant improvement in the performance of the force during the latter years of the war. It is probably correct to assume that the 1940 era LDV and Home Guard would not have been sufficiently competent to have performed in any meaningful military role in the event of an invasion, or for that matter a minor raid. Yet by 1942-1943 the Home Guard was being used to replace regular units performing home duties and would most likely have been able to fight an effective containing action against quite large forces as well

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[584] *The Shields Evening News*, December 5th 1944, p 6.
[585] *Ibid.*
[586] *Ibid.*
[587] *Ibid.*

as performing roles such as manning anti-aircraft, and searchlight, batteries. The changing role and increased efficiency is best demonstrated by considering the example of the Tynemouth battalion. On the 18th of June 1940 a patrol fired five rifle rounds at a low flying enemy bomber that was strafing the area, the men were gently reprimanded that they had wasted nearly all of the ammunition allotted to the battalion.[588] By the time of the Home Guards stand down however the Tynemouth battalion had nearly 1,000,000 rounds of ammunition under its control and had access to artillery pieces that had been in use by the Regular Army until 1943.[589] Whilst, by May 1942, men of the battalion were manning a "Z" battery of anti-aircraft rocket projectors stationed beside the Park Hotel, Tynemouth, as well as more traditional anti-aircraft guns, the gunners succeeded in bringing down at least one enemy aircraft during this period.[590]

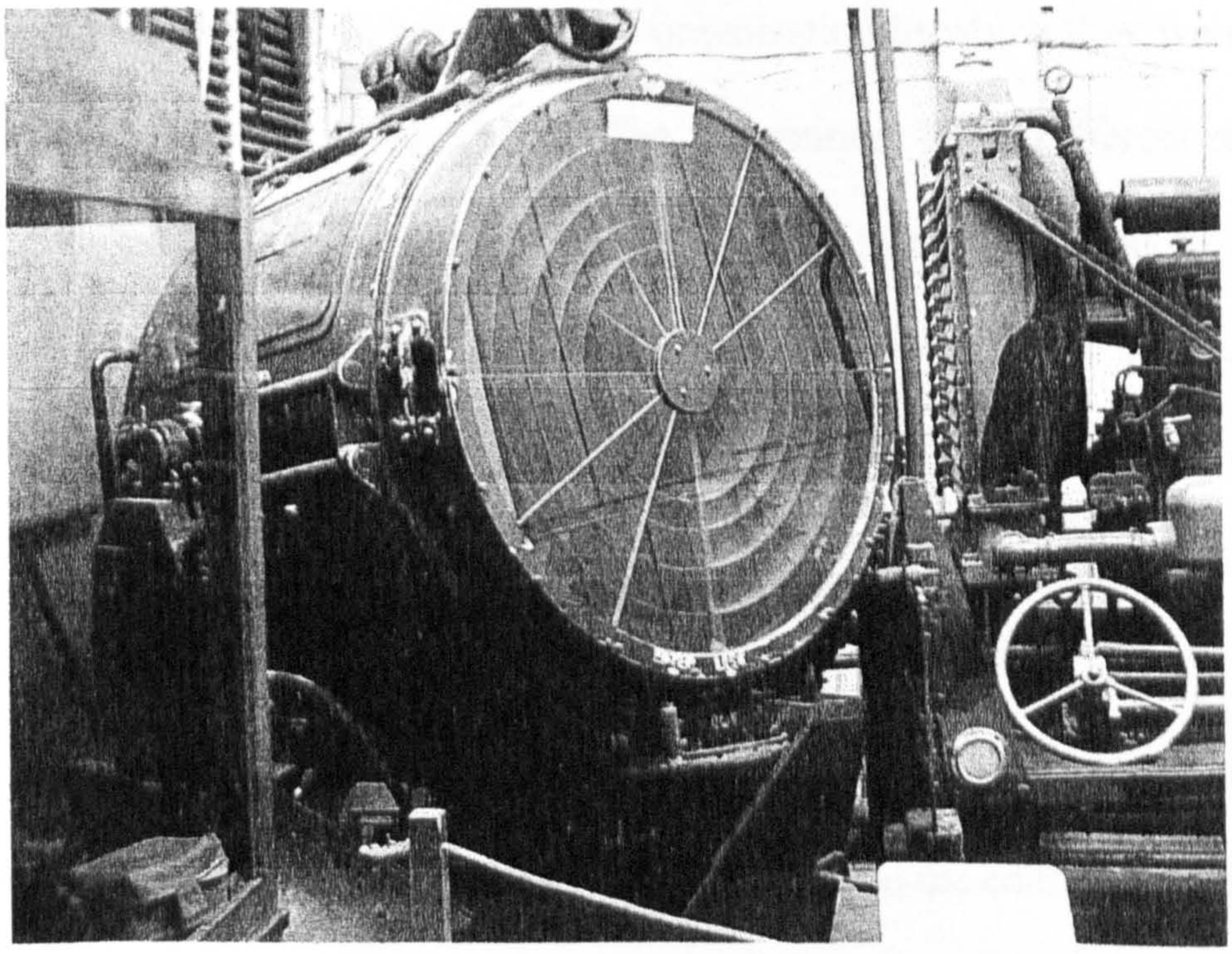

Figure 10. Searchlight, of the type manned by local Home Guard units.[591]

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[588] *The Shields Evening News*, November 28th 1944, p 3.
[589] *The Shields Evening News*, December 28th 1944, p 6.
[590] *The Shields Evening News*, January 10th 1945, p 3.
[591] From the author's own collection. Original on display at the Military Vehicle Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Despite this increasing level of operational efficiency there were some members of the Tyneside population who continued to look down on the organisation and to cast them in a comical light as bumbling incompetents. This had stemmed from the initial perception of the LDV – derisively called in some Tyneside localities the "look, duck and vanish Brigade"[592] – as a disorganised group and the attitude continued to persist in some areas throughout the war. In other areas however the Home Guard quickly overcame the initial scepticism and "the scorn of some members of the general public, who eventually changed their opinion and looked upon the Home Guard with pride."[593]

Much of the controversy that arose from the actions of the Home Guard was a result of the unclear definition of their duties. Many of the men involved in the LDV saw themselves as the last line of defence against a German invasion of Britain; as such they saw the service as a fighting military organisation in which they would be expected to engage and destroy the enemy. The government had a different role in mind for the organisation. For them the primary function of the LDV was to act as observers and as a force to discourage and apprehend fifth columnists. In other words the LDV was to act as an "armed special constabulary rather than a front-line combatant force."[594] This was confirmed by the first training instructions that were issued by the War Office to the LDV. These instructions stated that the LDV were not adequately equipped or trained to offer sustained resistance to German regulars and that the role of observation, passing on of information and the confining of enemy activities were the roles to which the force should dedicate itself, along with the

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[592] Interview NEW1/GY, August 2000.
[593] *The Shields Evening News*, November 15th 1944, p 3.
[594] MacKenzie, S P, *The Home Guard*, p 41. Also, NA: WO 199/3243. History of the Formation and Organisation of the Home Guard.

standard duties of guarding locations of tactical and/or industrial importance to the war effort.[595]

The duties of the LDV/Home Guard increased, but with a different emphasis, during the war to take in local area defence, patrolling, manning anti-aircraft batteries,[596] coastal defences, ARP duties and, later in the war, traditional police duties such as traffic control.[597] These disparate, but important, duties took a great deal of pressure off the Regular Army and the ARP services by providing trained and committed manpower. This is one of the great successes of the Home Guard organisation yet is overlooked in more traditional accounts of the service and in the myths that have been built up since the end of the war. By 1944 the Home Guard was responsible for the majority of routine security operations within Britain.[598] The Tynemouth 7th Battalion was even given a substantial role in the co-ordination of the local ARP effort. Due to the establishment of a Home Guard observation post on top of Billy Mill, a location that offered unparalleled views of the whole region. A special observation section of the Home Guard under the command of a Mr W Gallilee was commissioned and during a raid these men would relay messages to the local police and ARP services as well as the regional Commissioner. The Billy Mill post developed into the "eyes of the borough" and was to prove a significant aid to the ARP organisation.[599] The fact that the battalion was in the "unique position of closely co-operating with the Civil Defence authorities from its ideally sited observation post" was a key factor in improving the skills and abilities of the unit.[600]

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[595] *Ibid.*
[596] *The Shields Evening News*, December 30th 1944, January 10th 1945, and January 12th 1945.
[597] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files: re Home Guard 1940-1945, Official report on Home Guard traffic control training by Inspector J H Brown of Newcastle City Police, August 18th 1942.
[598] Yelton, D K, 'British Public Opinion', p 475.
[599] *The Shields Evening News*, November 21st 1944, p 3.
[600] *Ibid*, November 15th 1944, p 3.

As the war progressed, the role of the Home Guard was more widely questioned, by some guardsmen as well as by the public, and this led to a general lowering of morale amongst the force. The government was so concerned by this perceived downturn in enthusiasm that it decided that from December 1941 service in the Home Guard was to be compulsory under the National Service (no.2) Bill. This was not a particularly welcome move, as many men thought that the duties were by this time unnecessary and were viewed, by both the men themselves and in some cases their employers,[601] as a waste of potential leisure time. There were an increasing number of problems with compulsory Guardsmen failing to satisfactorily fulfil their appointed duties, a criminal offence. This took place in most Home Guard Battalions, including the 11th Battalion Home Guard (West Newcastle) where legal proceedings were initiated, under the Defence (Home Guard) Regulation Number 5, against two Guardsmen who had repeatedly failed to report for parade and guard duty.[602] This proves how rapidly the much vaunted blitz spirit could fade when people felt that they were no longer in any great danger and that attitudes towards voluntary service were vastly different from those of people who had been pressed into service at the loss of their perceived leisure time.

By 1943, various industrial employers were complaining that the continuing service of their workers in the Home Guard was beginning to affect productivity. They claimed that many men were leaving work, going on duty with the Home Guard and then, after minimal rest, going back to work again. Whilst it was undoubtedly true that this was having a negative effect on the workers the government, and Churchill in particular, realised that for many men their continuing service in the Home Guard was a boost to morale and that there would be much resentment if any

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[601] NA: LAB 8/112-113. Home Guard – Compulsory enrolments, 1942.
[602] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files: re Home Guard 1940-1945, Memo from Adjutant of 11th Btn. Home Guard to the Chief Constable, April 13th 1942.

move was made to disband the force or to limit the voluntary service of workers. It was not only the Home Guardsmen who were tiring themselves outside of work. This applied to ARP workers, housewives, and even the Mayor of Jarrow who, according to the journalist, J L Hodson, got home at 8.30 am after a twelve hour shift in the shipyard and was digging in his allotment by 11 am.[603]

The relations between the Home Guard and the police have often been characterised by popular opinion as poor, there is little evidence to suggest that this was the case on Tyneside. Whilst the surviving evidence for Newcastle betrays a tone of weariness and pained tolerance in the correspondence between the City Police and the Home Guard authorities this is balanced by several documents that comment on the good relationship and the high level of co-ordination that existed between the two services as well as by the record of the Tynemouth Battalion in co-operating with ARP Services and the civil authorities as described previously.

It is a widely held myth of the war that the LDV and Home Guard members thought of themselves as being above the law and as such could often take action that went a long way beyond their officially sanctioned powers. This myth would appear to be verified by some reports from Newcastle City Police. These hint at Home Guard units, especially the works' units, being somewhat nervous when guarding business properties and intolerant of police inspections after dark.[604] These reports are balanced by information from the local police regarding the success of joint exercises involving the Home Guard, especially the manning of road blocks and road closures.[605] Whilst undoubtedly there were incidences of Home Guard members

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[603] Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 74.

[604] TWAS: PA/NC/5/35. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Wartime Files: re Home Guard 1940-1945. Official list of works with established Home Guard units and warning to police officers re: caution to be taken when inspecting these premises, September 1940.

[605] *Ibid.* Special Police Report by Sergeant J W Ingoe ("B" Division) on the Home Guard road closure exercise of April 6th 1941.

overstepping their authority it would seem that these were concentrated largely in the first year of the LDV/Home Guard's existence. As the expertise within the force improved, commensurate with the hysteria surrounding the threat of invasion receding, the frequency of incidents involving members of the force slowed.

Relationships between the Home Guard and the Regular Army were also often strained. In the early days of the LDV the force was seen as a waste of time and indeed was often criticised for increasing problems due to its over-zealous prosecution of its duties. Perceived snubs by central government, especially over the issue of equipment, were fiercely criticised by members of the LDV/Home Guard and this led to a further straining of the relationship with the War Office. This lack of co-operation was highlighted by the editor of the '*Army Quarterly*' when, in turning down an article on the birth of the Home Guard by Brigadier William Carden Roe, he stated that, "It would not do, I think, to disclose that co-operation between Home Forces and the War Office was not quite as cordial as one would have liked."[606]

Inevitably the requirement for a force such as the Home Guard became untenable. By mid-1944 the useful service of the force had come to an end, and many of its founder members now wished to retire graciously. The threat of invasion or raiding was non-existent, whilst the Luftwaffe had long been subdued. Indeed, the only threat that still existed at this point in the war was from pilot-less rockets such as the V1 and, later in the war, the more powerful V2. By this point in the war even Churchill had recognised that the force served very little real purpose. The Home Guard was officially stood down on the December 3rd 1944, amidst fanfare and both local and national parades. Although the organisation was allowed to contribute men to the victory parades the next year, even though officially disbanded.

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[606] MacKenzie, S P, *The Home Guard*, pp 2-3.

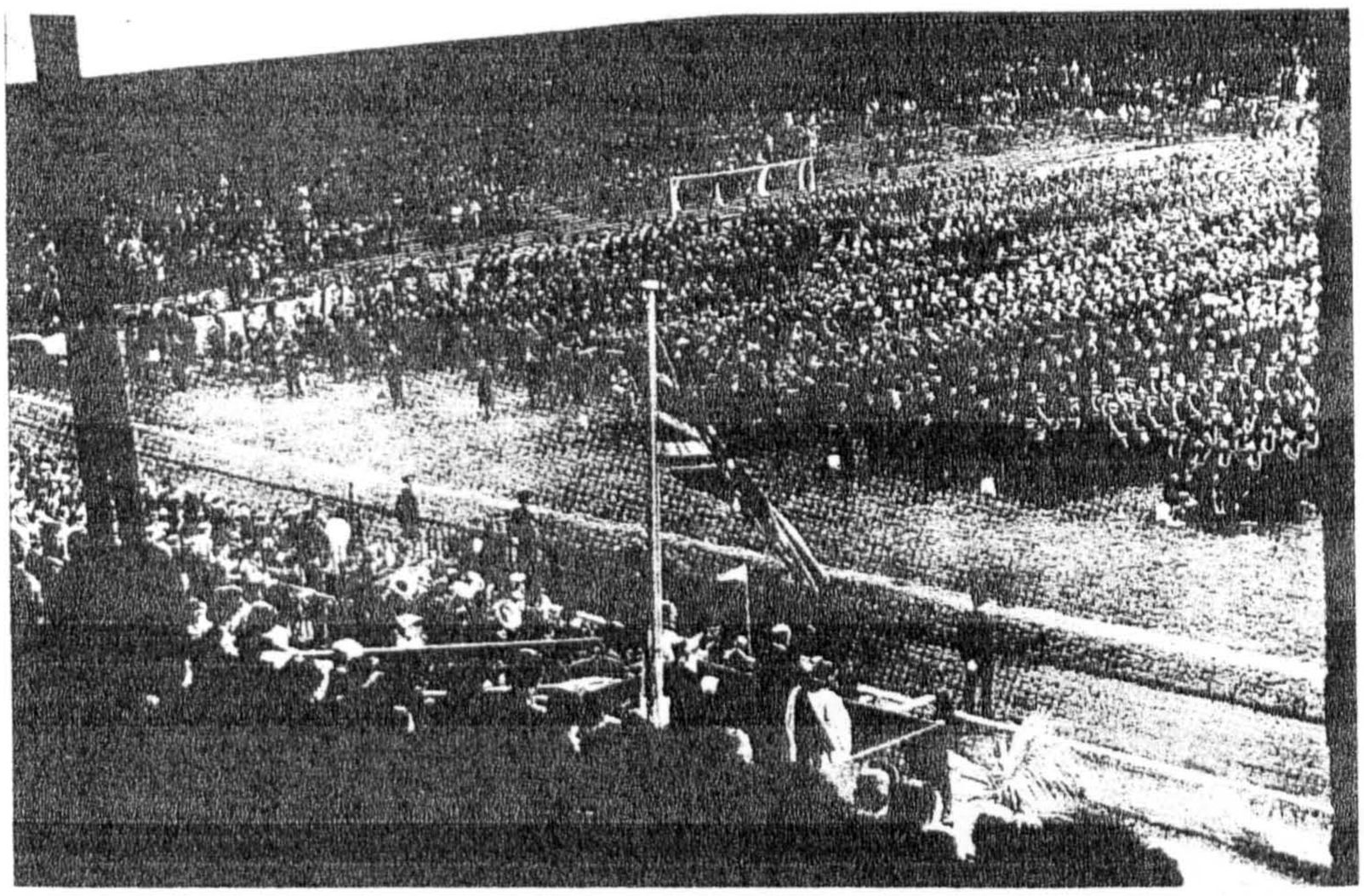

Figure 11. Victory parade held at St James' Park, Newcastle, 12th May 1945.[607]

The force was praised and then allowed to fade out of existence, but had it fulfilled its roles? At the stand-down parade in Tynemouth, the mayor related that Rear Admiral Sir Wellwood Maxwell had confided to him the opinion that "the comparative immunity which the great shipyards on the Tyne enjoyed was in no small measure to the defences put up at the mouth of the river."[608] The effectiveness of the Home Guard is difficult to quantify: there was no invasion or land force raiding to test the organisation. Co-operation between the Home Guard and the ARP services continued to be effective and this no doubt helped to control the incidents that occurred on Tyneside. It is in the training of younger members who later went on to join the regular forces and in the function of relieving members of the Regular Army from some duties in order to allow them to be used on active fronts where the Home Guard, whether on a local or national basis, made its greatest contribution. On Tyneside the greatest tribute paid to the Home Guard was in the re-assurance and confidence that it gave to the local population. The thanks given to the members of

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[607] Photograph © Newcastle Chronicle and Journal Ltd.
[608] *The Shields Evening News*, December 4th 1944.

the force at the various stand-down parades seem to have concentrated on this aspect of the force's duties.[609]

Other Civil Defence Services and Measures

Whilst the Home Guard did contribute to the anti-aircraft defences of the area, the vast majority of these positions were occupied by members of the regular armed forces. The anti-aircraft gun operations room, responsible for co-ordinating the anti-aircraft defences of the region, was located at Low Gosforth House, which was on the southernmost perimeter of Gosforth Park (the site is currently the home of the Northumberland County Records Office, although a re-location is imminent). This site actually continued in a military role until the early 1950s and the house itself was finally demolished in the mid-1970s.[610] The Regional War Room, which was responsible for the overall co-ordination of the aerial defence of the Tyneside area, was sited in the Royal Grammar School at Jesmond, on the outskirts of Newcastle upon Tyne.

In order to fool enemy air crew, a number of decoy sites were created on Tyneside. These sites, utilising lighting effects, were designed to simulate factories, foundries, marshalling yards and airfields working under blackout conditions and were usually situated some way from the actual target in open fields. The sites also included areas where controlled fires and simulated bomb bursts could be created in order to add further realism and to lure enemy aircraft. Each site had a number of personnel attached and the construction, maintenance and control of these positions

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[609] *Ibid.*

[610] The North-East Diary 1939-1945 website, [http://www.b.pears.co.uk/NE-Diary/index.html].

was complicated. On Tyneside sites were constructed to simulate everything from Low Fell Marshalling Yard (situated at Beamish) and the Tyneside Dockyards (Boldon Colliery) to the Tyne Naval Yards (Springwell). In addition to this there was a much more versatile and sophisticated site (known as a Starfish site) located in fields beside New York village.[611] Quite what the villagers and local colliery owners thought of this is, unfortunately, unrecorded.

Acting in co-operation with the anti-aircraft sites were extensive searchlight batteries manned almost exclusively by men of the Royal Artillery, who were attached to the Northumberland Fusiliers and placed under the authority of Fighter Command, along with substantial numbers of female volunteers.[612] By 1944 these personnel had been moved to the south coast and were replaced with American soldiers from the 225th AAA Searchlight Battalion of the US Army.[613] There were 36 such sites on Tyneside by 1944 providing a widespread coverage of the whole area. Anti-aircraft sites were common across the region and later in the war even included anti-aircraft rocket batteries. Unfortunately the effectiveness of the defences, especially early in the war, was not especially high with their main contribution being to the morale of the local populace, who at least had the satisfaction that they were being actively defended, and in providing boys with pieces of shrapnel for their collections. Barrage Balloon sites quickly came into operation at the outbreak of war as these were seen as an efficient way of deterring enemy bombing from low levels. The Tyneside barrage was especially concentrated around the banks of the Tyne but does not seem to have been very effective in deterring enemy aircraft. The balloons were crewed by both men and women and proved to be popular with local

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[611] A full list of the sites situated in the North East of England can be found in *ibid.*
[612] For a fuller description of this subject see, De Groot, G J, 'I Love the Smell of Cordite in Your Hair: Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War', *History*, 82, 265 (January 1997), pp 73-92.
[613] *Ibid.*

schoolchildren. They had an unfortunate habit of breaking free from their tethers, especially in rough conditions, and caused a large amount of damage to the roofs of buildings by either landing on them or dragging heavy cabling across the rooftops knocking looses slates and chimneys.

The Tyneside area was to play an important role if, as some military tacticians suspected, the enemy landed an invasion force in Northumberland; a plan of action and a line of defences known as the Tyne Stop Line was created. This plan entailed the immediate destruction of every bridge over the Tyne between the Rede valley and Scotswood (More than 100 bridges in total) and the cratering and mining of major roads. The bridges over the Tyne at Newcastle were to be prepared for demolition but were to be defended to the last man whilst the mouth of the Tyne was to be blocked by the sinking of two ships on the tidal bar. A substantial number of earthworks, pillboxes and other defences were built up in the area. These included a network of fortifications along the coastal beaches and alongside especially vulnerable points. Networks of pillboxes were built to cover possible coastal landing zones, ports and harbours, bridges, railway and road junctions, as well as inland locations where enemy airborne landings were possible. Gun positions were established to cover vital areas, especially rivers, and included naval guns being positioned at Clifford's Fort in North Shields, the mounting of torpedo tubes on the Government Jetty at North Shields to deter enemy vessels from invading the Tyne[614], and the placing of obstructions on any open areas to prevent glider landings. Whilst these defensive fortifications were not needed they continued to play a part in the defences of the area throughout the war and there are still many signs of these defences existing today.

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[614] Interview NS/RA1, 2002.

Figure 12. Pill box at Seaton Sluice, North Tyneside. Part of a substantial defensive complex that was designed to protect the local harbour mouth.[615]

The Police

Whilst it was widely acknowledged that the outbreak of war would increase the burden facing the police in Britain, little action was taken within the separate forces to prepare for this eventuality and the numbers of police, in England, fell from 60,028 officers in 1938 to just 43,644 in 1943, a decrease of 16,384 men.[616] New situations, however, did arise at the outbreak of hostilities.

Due to the exigencies of the wartime situation the local police forces on Tyneside, in common with those serving other parts of the country, were compelled to undertake a large number of new duties. These ranged from providing guards for sensitive areas to checking and enforcing blackout precautions at private dwellings and industrial sites. Many of the extra duties were of a paramilitary nature and quite

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[615] From the author's own collection.
[616] Thorpe, A, *The Longman Companion*, p 67.

outside the operational purview and experience of most regular police officers. These extra responsibilities were all to be performed under circumstances best described as trying, the situation being exacerbated by the numbers of serving police officers who were called up to the armed forces. Others were seconded to other duties in order to provide training to the inexperienced ARP Services as well as to the reserve police officers that would be serving alongside regular officers for the duration of the war, these events united to place a great strain on the officers of Tyneside.

The police were also expected to play the role of local intelligence service throughout the war and their duties included keeping a close eye on meetings of the local communists and pacifist organisations as well as those foreign nationals who had not been interned or who had been subsequently released from internment.[617] Several of the powers that were given to the police in this respect proved to be popular with higher ranking officers and there was some suggestion from the police that the scheme of registration of guests at boarding houses and hotels should be continued even after the war, despite the obvious impingement on civil liberties.[618] Intelligence efforts also resulted in the local police gathering intelligence by listening in to private conversations and by using shopkeepers and paid observers to gauge local opinion.

The previous lack of manpower affecting the police was partially solved during the course of the war when acting as a special constable or volunteer reserve officer counted as ARP service. The police could not have carried out their numerous duties without the assistance of a substantial number of these volunteers and in the Newcastle City force there were 540 special constables, 224 of them fully trained, by

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[617] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Conditions in Newcastle upon Tyne, special reports of the Chief Constable of City Police, September 12th 1941.
[618] TWAS: PA/NC/5/24. Newcastle upon Tyne City Police Special Report on system of hotel registration scheme by Superintendent Donohoe of E Division, December 6th 1940.

late summer of 1938.[619] Inevitably some of the volunteers were found to be unsuitable for service and by April of 1939 the number of special constables in Newcastle stood at 509.[620]

The question of arming the police was considered early in the war and whilst it was recommended there were important drawbacks voiced by those with experience of police service. The number of police officers trained to use firearms was relatively small and the likely public reaction to police officers patrolling with rifles was a major concern. Quite apart from this, the number of firearms available for police use was wholly inadequate if the intention was to arm even a small majority of officers. In 1940 there were only 1,000 rifles available for over 60,000 police officers and the majority of these weapons were allocated to those officers in seaside towns. The situation regarding handguns was little better. The police owned approximately 8,000 handguns (both automatics and revolvers) but the majority of these were allocated to London, again the major problem was a lack of firearms training.[621] There seems to have been a great reluctance on the part of the police forces to become another armed military force. Indeed Sir Alexander Maxwell, the police representative to the Home Office, stated that the police could give only limited assistance and that, in the event of invasion, they, "cannot be turned into a combatant force because of their many duties in connection with Civil Defence."[622]

The wartime powers that were given to the police and, by extension, the chief constables meant that many of these men became immensely powerful in their localities. At first, however, the chief constables were concerned that ARP measures

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[619] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and reports of from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP), September 16th 1938.
[620] Minute of April 21st 1939, pp 233-236 in *Ibid.*
[621] NA: HO 45/18523. Minutes of meeting held at War Office to discuss formation of armed bodies to meet attacks by parachutists, May 11th 1940, p 1.
[622] *Ibid.*

and the appointment of regional controllers would undermine their own authority despite the fact that the regional controllers would only be expected to take charge in the event of an invasion. This was not however the case and in Newcastle, along with other areas, the chief constable was appointed to an influential position in charge of the ARP Services and the co-ordination of the local ARP scheme. Chief Constable F. J. Crawley, on assuming his position as ARP Controller, was granted several far-reaching powers including the right to make "widespread executive decisions in the event of an emergency".[623] In many ways this was perfectly sensible as the police played a major role in both the creation and the activities of the ARP Services although the position was open to exploitation and, indeed, Mr Crawley was compelled to resign his position after a national scandal, discussed in more detail in chapter six, in 1944.[624]

The early burden of the training of air raid wardens and other ARP workers fell upon the local police forces and local forces were compelled to contribute numbers of regular officers on attachment to ARP duties.[625] Included amongst the police training schedule were the techniques of anti-gas training although the standards varied considerably and in at least one case the pomposity of an officer, who told locals that poisonous gas had been released from an escaped barrage balloon, could have had serious repercussions.[626] In most cases however the police training proved to be of a competent and professional standard and the officers of Tyneside, both regular and volunteer, performed their duties with bravery and professionalism. The local police forces had a difficult job in that they, by necessity

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[623] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and reports of from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP), letter from Lord Privy Seal to the local authorities, March 31st 1939.
[624] *The Times*, March 30th 1944, p 2.
[625] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and reports of from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP), September 16th 1938.
[626] North Shields Library website, [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk/Memories/body_memory_11.html].

of the wartime situation, became a quasi-military organisation whilst they had to retain the support of the general public to continue to fulfil their civic duties.

A Worthwhile Service?

The civil defence authorities on Tyneside would seem to have coped with the wartime situation in an efficient and calm manner. Whilst there were undoubtedly some tensions existent between the Home Guard and the civil authorities these are outweighed by the evidence suggesting that co-operation remained good and morale, in the two differing arms, steady. Whilst the initial formation of voluntary bodies such as the Home Guard was met with mixed amounts of both enthusiasm and derision the force went on to prove its usefulness and earned the respect and affection of the majority of Tyneside residents.

Actions taken by the police on Tyneside during the war, at least relating to civil defence, are more difficult to evaluate. Undoubtedly the duties faced by the wartime police officer were multiplied by the war and the local forces had to cope with the challenging situation whilst also being faced with manpower shortages and the training of part time and/or volunteer officers. The reluctance on the part of the chief constables to become another quasi-military armed force remained throughout the war and possibly this was a vital contribution to the force retaining the trust of the general public.

The fact that the area was never attacked by land forces means that the civil defences were not tested and this makes it difficult to judge the overall effectiveness of the measures taken. However, the evidence suggests that the structures in place were adaptable and that the organisational standard remained high throughout the war.

Certainly the efficiency of the local Home Guard units compares most favourably with those of other parts of the country. Indeed, it was stated that from June 1940 that Tynemouth borough was never left unguarded, being constantly patrolled by its Home Guard Battalion.[627] The existing evidence suggests that Tyneside benefited from an enthusiastic participation in voluntary civil defence duties, from well organised civil authority services, and from additional fortifications built and staffed by both regular and volunteer forces. Perhaps the greatest contribution that the civil defence organisations made to the regional war effort was in the boost to morale that they gave to the general public by giving reassurance that they were being actively protected and watched over.

[627] *The Shields Evening News*, November 21st 1944, p 3.

Chapter 5

War Culture – 'Wor' Culture

Preparations for War

The gathering clouds of war ensured that the people of Tyneside were made increasingly aware of the measures taken to protect them from enemy attack. The digging of trenches and the construction of air raid shelters, mentioned in chapter two, were the most visible signs of the coming dangers, but there were others. The issue of gas masks to all, the assigning of identity numbers, the preparations for the mass evacuation of all vulnerable people and the arrangements for establishing a total blackout, were all portents of what could be expected in the immediate future. Despite the fact that the expected aerial onslaught did not materialise, and during the subsequent lull known as the Phoney War, Tyneside rapidly shifted to a wartime footing. To some though the fact of being at war still caused shock, one woman, an eleven year old girl at the time, remembers listening to the declaration of war and bursting into tears, suddenly feeling older.[628]

As mentioned in chapter two, the population of Tyneside was protected by several different types of air raid shelter, as the war continued these played a larger part in the ordinary lives of the residents of the area. The shelters ranged from the deep, communal, shelters such as the Ouseburn Culvert, used mainly by residents of Byker and Sandyford, to the ubiquitous Anderson Shelter that was installed in many

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[628] North Shields Library website [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk/Memories/memory_139.html], April 2004.

gardens. For many local residents the lack of a garden meant that they were not eligible for an Anderson Shelter and these people had to make do with the various public shelters that were erected in the area from 1938 or the few large communal shelters. The communal shelters were often very popular with locals and during raids they attracted large numbers. Most had, by 1940, organised their own forms of entertainment. Usually, this consisted of music in the form of individual instrumentalists or the ever-popular, morale boosting, sing-along. The standards of comfort in these shelters varied considerably, but almost all had, as a bare minimum, wooden bunks and areas where different groups could gather. Some of the deep shelters possessed even greater facilities. The Ouseburn Culvert, which could accommodate 3,000 people, contained, in addition to bunk beds, "seats, toilets and a shop selling soft drinks and snacks".[629] This well-equipped deep shelter also had a nurse permanently in attendance during air raid warnings. The protection offered by the shelter combined with the relative comfort when compared to many of the alternatives resulted in the Culvert being widely liked by local residents.[630] The Victoria Tunnel, stretching from Ouse Street to Spittal Tongues, was similar to the Ouseburn Culvert, although it was larger and had a 5,000 person capacity. It was also seen as one of the few comfortable shelters.[631] Ad-hoc shelters continued to be used, not only in Newcastle city centre but also in areas such as Percy Main where the railway tunnel under the station was utilised. With sandbagged entrances and the instalment of bunk-beds the tunnel became a reasonably comfortable place of shelter and local children remember that the atmosphere was akin to a large scale camping excursion.[632]

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[629] Correspondence from Mr A Czupryna, 2001.
[630] *Ibid.*
[631] Correspondence from Mrs B M Stewart, 2001.
[632] Correspondence from Mr R Pearson, 2001.

The attraction of the communal shelters was primarily the result of the feeling of security in numbers and the need for many people who lived in tightly-knit communities to be together in order to share the wartime experiences. Even when no community shelter was available it was very common for "families and friends to gather ... in one or others house", as they felt safer when in familiar company.[633] This propensity for fraternising in large groups was contrary to the original policy envisaged by Newcastle City Council, which initially advised that shelters should hold no more than 50 people. The propensity for gathering in larger groups continued to be a concern for the authorities.[634]

The system of communal sheltering could, however, lead to disaster. This was clearly demonstrated on Tyneside during the night of May 3rd 1941 when Wilkinson's Shelter, located at the corner of George Street and King Street, in North Shields was destroyed by a direct hit. The shelter was in the basement of a local lemonade factory and was very popular with local residents, who enjoyed the community feeling that was engendered by the entertainment that took place on a regular basis in the shelter. Unfortunately, as this was a Saturday night, the shelter was even busier than normal. It was later established that 195 people were in residence at the time of the incident. A total of 96 were killed inside the shelter, whilst a further seven people, who were rescued, died of their injuries in hospital. Only 92 survived the disaster. The incident showed up some of the severe weaknesses in the shelter system that existed on Tyneside. Many of the large shelters were in basements and had little or no reinforcement in the event of a direct hit.[635] In the case of Wilkinson's Shelter, the factory above contained large amounts of heavy machinery that had not been

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[633] Correspondence from Mr K B Young, 2001.
[634] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP), June 10th 1938.
[635] *The Shields Evening News*, May 4th 1941, p 1.

removed. It was later agreed that many of the fatalities were a direct result of crush injuries sustained when the mass of machinery fell through the basement ceiling onto those below. Others were injured or killed by the amount of acid that was stored on the site for the production of lemonade. Some local residents believed that this location should never have been utilised as a shelter in the first place and one local, a young child at the time, remembers her father, a member of the National Fire Service, forbidding her mother from going into the shelter because of the danger of collapsing machinery.[636]

Figure 13. Rescue workers at the scene of Wilkinson's Shelter, North Shields, 1941.[637]

[636] Interview: NS/BA, 2004.
[637] Photograph © of North Tyneside Central Library, Local Studies Section.

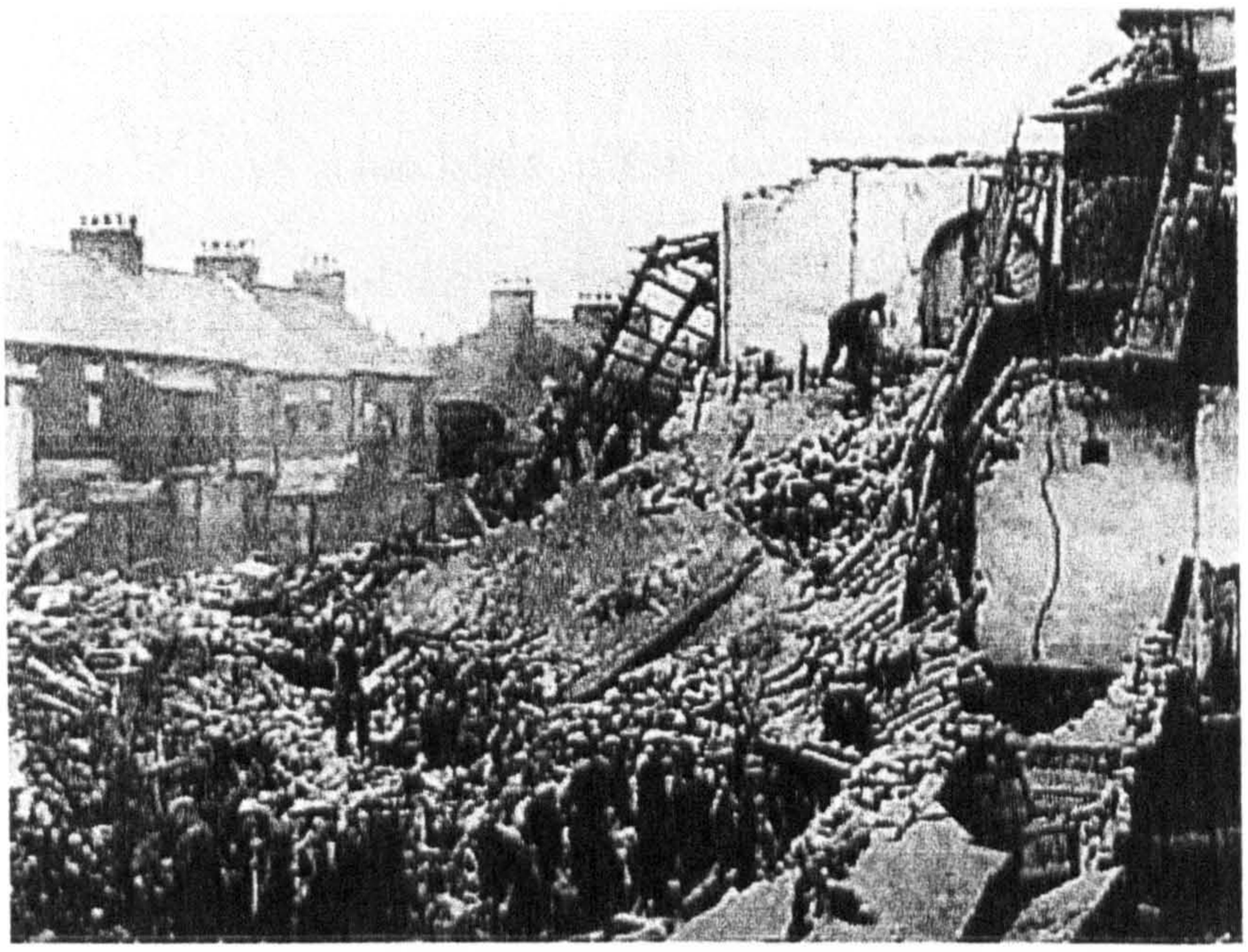

Figure 14. Another view of the Wilkinson's Shelter incident.[638]

The smaller, brick-built, public shelters that were dotted around the area were the refuge of others who did not have access to a communal shelter or an Anderson. Despite the fact that many of these shelters had been poorly built, largely due to a shortage of cement or incompetence, and had a tendency to collapse under the strain of heavy raiding they were continually used throughout the war by the people of Tyneside. Indeed, many of these shelters were so poorly built that "they showed a disconcerting propensity to collapse … when bombs fell nearby."[639] Some residents distrusted these shelters not because of fears over their protective value but because they feared that immoral activities were conducted inside. One local resident remembers sheltering in a neighbour's under-stair cupboard, next to the gas-main, in preference to the local public shelter because her mother believed that, in addition to the dirty condition of the shelter, "funny things went on in there."[640] Under-stair shelters were a fairly common occurrence although there capabilities for saving lives

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[638] Photograph © of North Tyneside Central Library, Local Studies Section.
[639] Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 180.
[640] Correspondence from Mr K Christie, 2001.

remained dubious the attraction of remaining in a familiar property was strong. This concern would appear to have some basis in fact, as complaints regarding the poor conduct of several people in air raid shelters were being investigated during the winter of 1940.[641] As a result of these failings the brick shelters proved to be universally unpopular but were often the only thing available in some working class districts.

Of course, one of the most ubiquitous memories of the war in Britain is that of the Anderson Shelter. These were corrugated iron shelters that were designed to be buried in private gardens and provided protection to entire families. These shelters had an alarming propensity to flood, and were uncomfortable, especially in winter or in damp weather. This was especially true when many raids resulted in entire nights having to be spent inside the shelter. For a large number of Tyneside residents, however, they were a source, not only of valuable protection, but, also of pride as many families expended their powers of creativity to make their shelter more comfortable. Some even went so far as to utilise the covering of soil on top of the shelter for growing flowers or, more usually, vegetables.

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[641] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, November 23rd 1940.

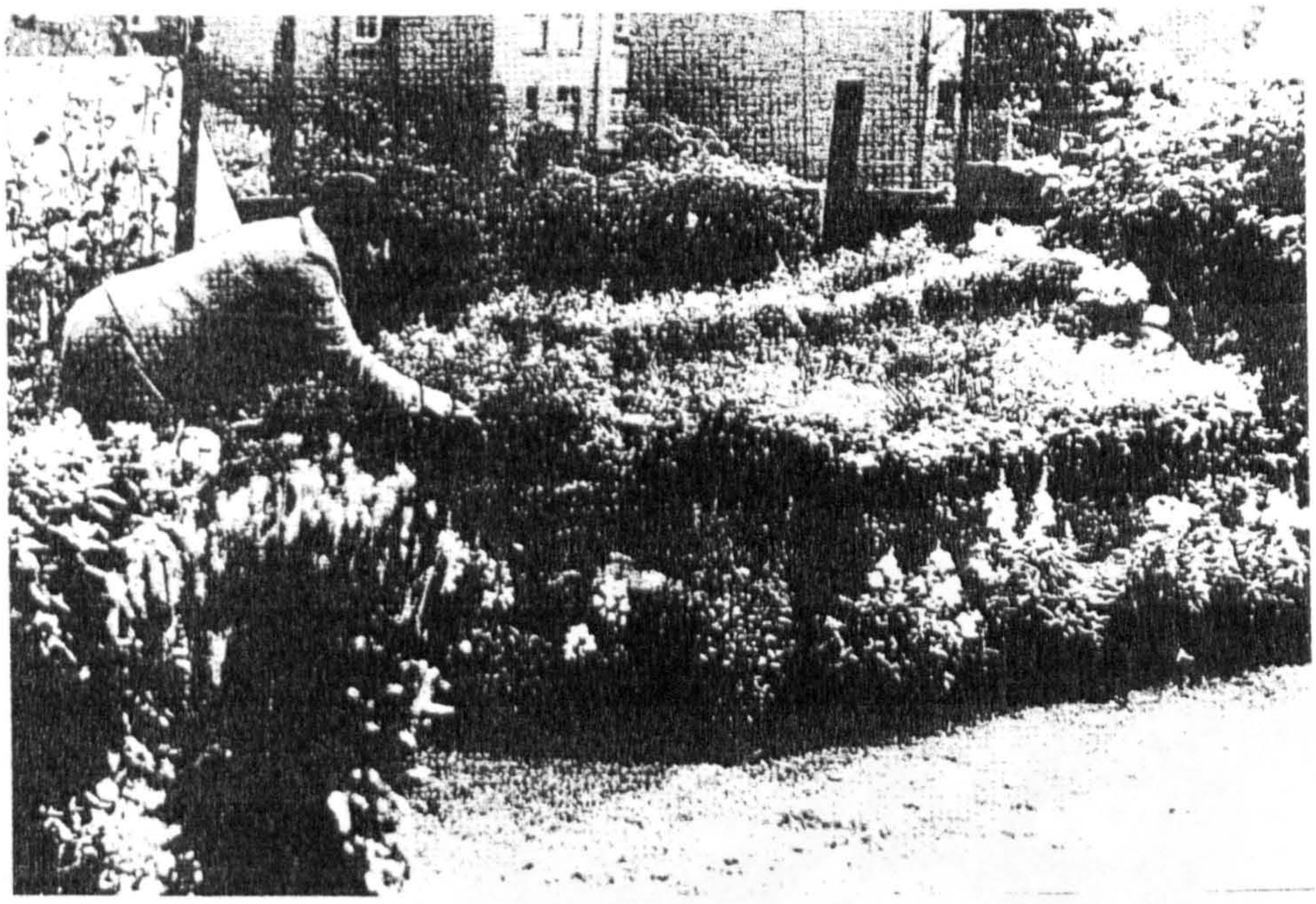

Figure 15. Flower bed over an Anderson Shelter, Condercum Gardens, 1939.[642]

Opinion on the Anderson Shelters continued to be divided on Tyneside with many detesting them as cold, damp and uncomfortable. Others, especially the young, felt a curious exhilaration at being in the Anderson Shelter as its tight confines increased the feeling of adventure during air raids. What cannot be doubted is the fact that these shelters saved many Tyneside lives, as they did all over the country, for they proved to be remarkably resilient to enemy bombing.

For many of the children and parents of Tyneside, in common with those in other urban areas, the beginning of the war was marked by the turbulence of evacuation. Whilst the scheme in Newcastle upon Tyne attracted large numbers, as described in chapter 3, the experiences of the children and their families were mixed. Tyneside suffered some of the worst poverty in the country and many of the children had few possessions. Many had no change of clothing and the standards of footwear possessed by many received extensive criticism. Official propaganda, however, presents the evacuation as a relatively carefree experience, an adventure that the

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[642] Reproduced with the kind permission of *The Newcastle Evening Chronicle*. Photograph © Newcastle Chronicle and Journal Ltd.

majority of children enjoyed. Official photographs, often of the rehearsal rather than the real thing, later published in the press show bands of brave faced youngsters clutching bags and parcels, or waving to parents as they cheerily embark on trains destined for the rural unknown. Even in these images, however, there is often a detectable apprehension clearly discernible in the faces of the children.

Figure 16. Newcastle evacuation rehearsal, four days before the war. Their apprehension can clearly be seen. In the original it is discernible that all are wearing newly polished shoes.[643]

Many thousands of Tyneside residents were affected by the process of evacuation that was put into place to ensure that the most vulnerable were re-located to areas less likely to witness substantial attack. The original plan put forward by the ARP Controller was that all vulnerable people would be evacuated from the area. This was to include not only children but also the elderly and infirm. The estimated demands that such a large-scale evacuation would create were substantial. As a result it was suggested that a committee with its own dedicated secretary be set up to finalise arrangements with regard to "transport, accommodation, food, attention,

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[643] Photograph © Newcastle Chronicle and Journal Ltd.

sanitation", and to liaise with the local authorities to which the people of Tyneside were to be evacuated (these were later replaced by Billeting Tribunals).[644] Naturally, the key thought behind the evacuation of many Tyneside children was that they were being removed from physical danger but it was also thought that it would reassure the families of the evacuees as they could carry on with their duties knowing that their children were safe. The reality of course proved that this desired effect was not always the result of the evacuation policy. Whilst the plans were in place in advance, the reality of moving so many people proved to be more complicated than had been anticipated. In some cases, such as at Tynemouth and Wallsend, children were not evacuated until several days after the war had begun.[645]

Although the evacuation scheme appears to have enjoyed popularity on Tyneside the numbers of parents willing to evacuate their offspring varied considerably even within the region. The middle-classes from the more well off areas of Newcastle, such as Jesmond and Gosforth, would appear to have been more willing to evacuate their children than their working-class neighbours, areas such as North Shields and Wallsend showing the lowest proportion of evacuees despite these areas often being more at risk from air attack than the middle-class suburbs. Of those mothers and children eligible for evacuation 57% were evacuated from Newcastle at the outbreak of war. This can be compared to the figures of 29% from Tynemouth, North Shields and Wallsend, 28% from Jarrow, and 26% from South Shields.[646]

Whilst it has recently become commonplace to think of evacuation as a dehumanising and random affair, characterised by unaccompanied children being sent

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[644] TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and Reports of the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP). Report re: Trench and Bomb Proof Shelter System compiled by Chief Constable Crawley of Newcastle City Police, April 29th 1938, p 57.
[645] Brown, M, *Evacuees. Evacuation in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), p 20.
[646] Titmuss, R M, *Problems of Social Policy* (London: HMSO, 1950), p 552.

to any destination and often being picked out by prospective adoptive families in scenes akin to a cattle auction, or a slave, market, the truth is that many of the children were evacuated in large, accompanied groups, often organised by schools. Equally, large numbers of people evacuated their homes by making private arrangements.[647] The most common method of private arrangement was to send children to a friend or relative living in an unthreatened area. Another means was to seek to rent out suitable accommodation in a rural area, often a disused farmhouse or workers cottage. It has been argued that this policy was largely impossible for the urban poor and working classes, but there are some cases of working class Tyneside families following this method of evacuation.[648] School evacuations were often equally ad-hoc. With classes becoming separated and teachers being called up it was inevitable that the groups would lose some of their coherence. The long distances that were often travelled did not help in this process. For example, several school groups from Tyneside and Northumberland were evacuated to Ealing, in Middlesex.[649]

Of course, the urban poor of Tyneside (an area especially hard hit during the depression of the 1930s) did experience, often severe, problems during the process of evacuation. Many were poorly clothed and required assistance from either their own local authority or the authority in which they had been billeted; Tyneside evacuees were largely sent to Cumbria, rural Northumberland or North Yorkshire. Indeed, "The city of Newcastle admitted that of its thirty-one thousand children registered for evacuation, one-eighth were 'deficient' in footwear and one-fifth in clothing, and its standards for measuring 'deficiency' were likely to be lower than those of the villages which received them." Some of the clothing that was worn by evacuees was in such abominable condition that it was burnt when the children arrived in their billeting

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[647] *Ibid*, pp 24-29.
[648] Interview. NS/RA, 2002.
[649] Titmuss, R M, *Social Policy*, p 431.

area.[650] The official minutes of the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP) expenditure analysis contradicts the number given by Titmuss and instead refers to 43,367 children being present in the city, spread over 75 registered schools.[651] It is possible that not all of these children had been registered for the evacuation scheme. If this is so then it would mean that the take-up rate of the official evacuation scheme in Newcastle stood at approximately 71%. An unknown number would, of course, have been evacuated through private arrangements. No figures indicate the total number of children in areas such as Tynemouth County Borough but the number of those evacuated is known. From Tynemouth Borough just 1,481 children were evacuated unaccompanied by adults, whilst neighbouring South Shields returned a figure of 3,826.[652]

The problems posed by the poverty of many local families were to prove a persistent dilemma which the local authorities could never completely resolve. As late as May 1941, Newcastle Council's Public Assistance Committee was reporting that it had supplied almost 382 children with clothing and/or footwear and several of these children had been supplied on more than one occasion. At the same time there were also a total of 838 applications for the supply of clothing from sources ranging from the Director of Education to the WVS.[653] Comparing the one-eighth of those 31,000 registered for evacuation with the number given as being supplied with clothing/footwear shows us that less than 10% of the estimated number requiring clothing had in fact been supplied. This figure would be even smaller if we knew

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[650] *Ibid*, p 115.
[651] Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 44. Calder takes the figure of 31,000 children from Titmuss, R M, *Problems*, but this would appear to be contradicted by the figures given by Newcastle Council (TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes & Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP), Analysis of Expenditure, June 10th 1938) who place the figure at more than 45,000.
[652] Titmuss, R M, *Social Policy*, p 550.
[653] TWAS: 359/809(5) File 239. Newcastle Public Assistance Committee official letter, May 26th 1941.

exactly the number of children that had been supplied on more than one occasion. Admittedly these figures are somewhat arbitrary and it is likely that clothing supplies were also acquired from other sources. This highlights merely one aspect in which the evacuation scheme on Tyneside was fraught with problems.

Although the evacuation scheme seems to have enjoyed widespread popularity on Tyneside the events of the war had an impact that was shared by most other areas of the country. When mass bombing failed to occur in the first months of the war many of those families who had either been evacuated themselves or had sent children away were lulled into overconfidence and a false sense of security. This resulted in many of the evacuees returning to their urban homes. In Newcastle this was highlighted as a problem as early as October 1939 when it was said that substantial "numbers of evacuees [were] returning due to boredom, dislike of the countryside, concern for husbands and [a] false sense of security."[654] By January 1940 it was estimated that over 40% of evacuated children had returned to the city and that the numbers were increasing daily.[655] Evacuees also returned according to wartime rhythms: in the aftermath of a particularly heavy raid the numbers of evacuees increased whilst, during periods of relative calm, the numbers of returning evacuees tended to intensify.[656] The occasional heavy raid saw increasing numbers of children being evacuated but these tended to be short term absences with the evacuees returning to the area once the immediate danger had decreased.[657]

The problem of evacuees failing to settle in their billet area was chronic and occasionally troublesome. Of course, many of these children were simply re-housed in other billets but, as the expected bombing failed to take place, renewed confidence

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[654] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, October 15th – 29th 1939.
[655] *Ibid*, January 18th 1940.
[656] *Ibid*, September 12th 1941.
[657] *Ibid*, September 26th 1941.

led to the opinion that there would be no serious bombing in the area. This in turn reinforced the view that the vulnerable had been evacuated for no reason. When combined with the feelings of home-sickness and loss that the parting of families engendered it is perhaps unsurprising that so many parents demanded the return of their children from the billeting areas. In instances when wives were separated from their husbands who were still on Tyneside the concern was sometimes around the chances for indiscretions with members of the opposite sex. The pressure could also be exerted upon parents by their children and one young girl remembers persuading her parents to let her return from Wooler to North Shields "just in time for the bombing to start!"[658] This would seem to have been a relatively common experience and led to several waves of evacuation. Even before the bombing of Tyneside, the collapse of French resistance had encouraged further evacuations from Tyneside.[659] The pressure to return was not, of course, a one way exhortation. There were many people in the billeting areas that did not welcome these urban children and wanted them to return regardless of any danger. Other, private, concerns saw the shuttling of evacuees as a business opportunity. Evacuees were encouraged to return, either by their hosts or by the profiteering actions of at least one local bus company. This company saw the chance for profit and offered substantially reduced prices for returning evacuees during November 1939.[660] Throughout the period there are frequent references to the numbers of returning evacuees and the disturbances that their return brought to the community. The children were often left to roam freely due to the reduced amount of schooling available, and, by February 1940, the main concern of the public was said to be the "return of unruly children. These [were]

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[658] North Shields Library website [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk/Memories/memory_116.html], April 2004.
[659] Titmuss, R M, *Social Policy*, p 243.
[660] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Police Duty Room Fortnightly Reports, October 29th – November 12th 1939.

mostly running wild".[661] The education of Tyneside children suffered further at the hands of bureaucracy. The government's attempt to recover money from parents for the upkeep of their evacuated children placed great demands on local authorities. Several, including Newcastle, were forced to transfer school officers and teachers from their normal duties and use them as assessing officials measuring the ability of parents to pay.[662]

The youths of the area were evacuated to several locations: Cumbria, North Yorkshire,[663] and Northumberland being the foremost areas to billet Tyneside children. Some were evacuated as entire classes along with their teacher. The teacher then often became responsible for overseeing the living conditions of their young charges. It is impossible to quantify the overall experience of those children who were evacuated. The events that were witnessed by these children could vary so much, even within the same village, that any to attempt to establish an overall 'evacuation experience' is doomed to failure. Undoubtedly, some had very positive experiences and enjoyed their time outside the urban sprawl of Tyneside, despite the ever-present feelings of home sickness. A woman from North Shields, then a young schoolgirl, remembers being evacuated to Otterburn and enjoying working on the farm, supplementing rations with regular shooting expeditions in which both the girl and her younger brother took part.[664] Others, however, experienced cruelty and were utilised as domestic servants or involuntary farm workers – effectively, indentured labour. Some children were unfortunate enough to be billeted with people who had no inclination to care for them. Some were punished for minor offences, such as

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[661] *Ibid*, February 29th 1940.
[662] Titmuss, R M, *Problems*, p 157.
[663] For a recent publication describing some of the experiences of north-east children see, Moore, G, *Thirsk at War 1939-1945* (Unknown location: Mole End, 2004).
[664] North Shields Library website [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk/Memories/memory_116.html], April 2004.

being late home from school; others were forcibly starved or beaten.[665] One evacuee remembers how his brother was punished for arriving at his billet late from school. "He would get no tea and had to go home hungry ... His notes to home always asked if he could come home but nothing about what was happening to him."[666] It was not until the boy's father, a miner, visited him and "found him cowering under the big pot sink in the kitchen being punished" that he was relieved of his suffering and returned home.[667] For children, and the experience was far from uncommon, who were unfortunate enough to suffer such unhappiness there was very little recourse. Many failed to alert their parents to what was happening as they felt that they would simply be adding to their burden and this was still a time when many children automatically obeyed adults. These unfortunates eventually returned home, often as a result of their parents discovering their maltreatment or simply because their parents missed them. The evacuation was, undoubtedly, a formative event for some Tyneside children but for many it was a short disruption to their lives and they returned to their familiar surroundings very quickly.

Despite the willingness of the people of Tyneside to rally behind the nation in war and the awareness of possible air attack the greatest criticism was aimed at the blackout regulations that came into force immediately on the declaration of war. The necessity for maintaining an effective blackout of the country at night was widely recognised but the inconveniences, as well as the very real dangers, that this caused ensured that there were those who resented the precaution. The lack of bombing early in the war lent credence to those who doubted the necessity of the levels of precaution being taken but by 1940 the preparations of the area were being tested as the Luftwaffe stepped up its bombing campaign.

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[665] Correspondence from Mr R Reay, 2001.
[666] *Ibid.*
[667] *Ibid.*

Experiencing War

After war was declared at 11 o'clock on the morning of Sunday the 3rd of September 1939 Constable Arthur Furness of Newcastle City Police was ordered to sound the air raid sirens for the first alert of the war.[668] Sirens were sounded and people took to shelters. The noise sounded a false alarm, the first of many, and the alert was quickly cancelled.[669] Conditions in the area continued to be unexpectedly quiet, in line with conditions nationwide, but then in June 1940 came a rash of alerts and warnings. The first bombs to fall on Newcastle came in the early evening of Tuesday, July the 2nd, when a single German raider dropped high explosive bombs on The Close and Forth Street. One bomb hit Spillers Flour Warehouse killing the 28 year old gateman, Mr John Kelly, who became the first civilian casualty of enemy action over Tyneside.[670]

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[668] Ingleton, R, *The Gentlemen at War. Policing Britain 1939-45* (Maidstone: Cranborne, 1994), p 5.
[669] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Reports of Whitley Bay Urban District Council ARP Committee.
[670] Details and numbers of casualties are constructed from several sources, including: North East Diary 1939-1945 website [http://www.bpears.org.uk/NE-Diary/], 2003; various post-raid reports in TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Post-war report of Whitley Bay Municipal Council, ARP; TWAS: PA/NC/5/51. Newcastle City Police files re: ARP.

Figure 17. The remnants of Spiller's mill and factory.[671]

Other bombs impacted on the Hawthorn Leslie engineering works in Forth Street and a couple narrowly missed the Tyne Bridge, which was thought to be the main target of the raid.[672] The protection of the city was shown to be somewhat lacking by this raid as the German bomber "had virtually the freedom of Newcastle for about 20 minutes". There are also unsubstantiated rumours that the Luftwaffe was using captured British aircraft to avoid detection, although this has never been proven and is highly unlikely.[673] In addition to the death of Mr Kelly, a further fourteen people, six of them children, were killed in Jarrow when the same aircraft dropped three high explosive bombs in the area of Princess Street. This attack occurred some 41 minutes after the attack on Newcastle. Eleven properties were destroyed, including a school, and a further 36 houses were damaged. Several air raid shelters were also damaged or destroyed, and teams of firemen and ARP Rescue teams worked in relays throughout

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[671] Photograph © Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle Libraries & Arts, Leisure Services Department, 1992.
[672] North East Diary 1939-1945 website [http://www.bpears.org.uk/NE-Diary/], 2004.
[673] Correspondence from Mr S Hogarth, 2001.

the night to rescue those who had been trapped in the debris.[674] These were the first of 39 fatalities to occur in Jarrow due to enemy bombing.

As an industrial area and a port Tyneside was a prime target for enemy air raids whilst its location strung along the banks of a major river made it easily identifiable from the air. All of this led to the local authorities on Tyneside treating the threat from enemy air attack very seriously indeed. Little has been written on the attacks that hit Tyneside and this has led some to believe that the area had escaped serious bombing. The truth is that whilst Tyneside was not as heavily bombed as was expected at the outbreak of war the area did suffer some serious attacks and in places heavy casualties were inflicted.

The aims of the Luftwaffe, in attacking Tyneside, were obvious. As an area producing material vital for the war effort the area was given a high priority by Hitler and the Luftwaffe had detailed aerial plans of the area which marked designated industrial and civil targets.[675] The majority of raids during the first few years of the war were launched with the intent of destroying and degrading the area's industrial capabilities. To this end most of the raids targeted shipyards, known factories, goods stations and communication networks. Unfortunately, the inaccuracy of the German bombing meant that civilian areas were often hit. This meant that the majority of the casualties suffered on Tyneside occurred along the river banks where the industrial sites were most common. Areas such as Tynemouth, Wallsend, Jarrow and South Shields suffered proportionately much greater casualties than areas further upstream, like Newcastle.

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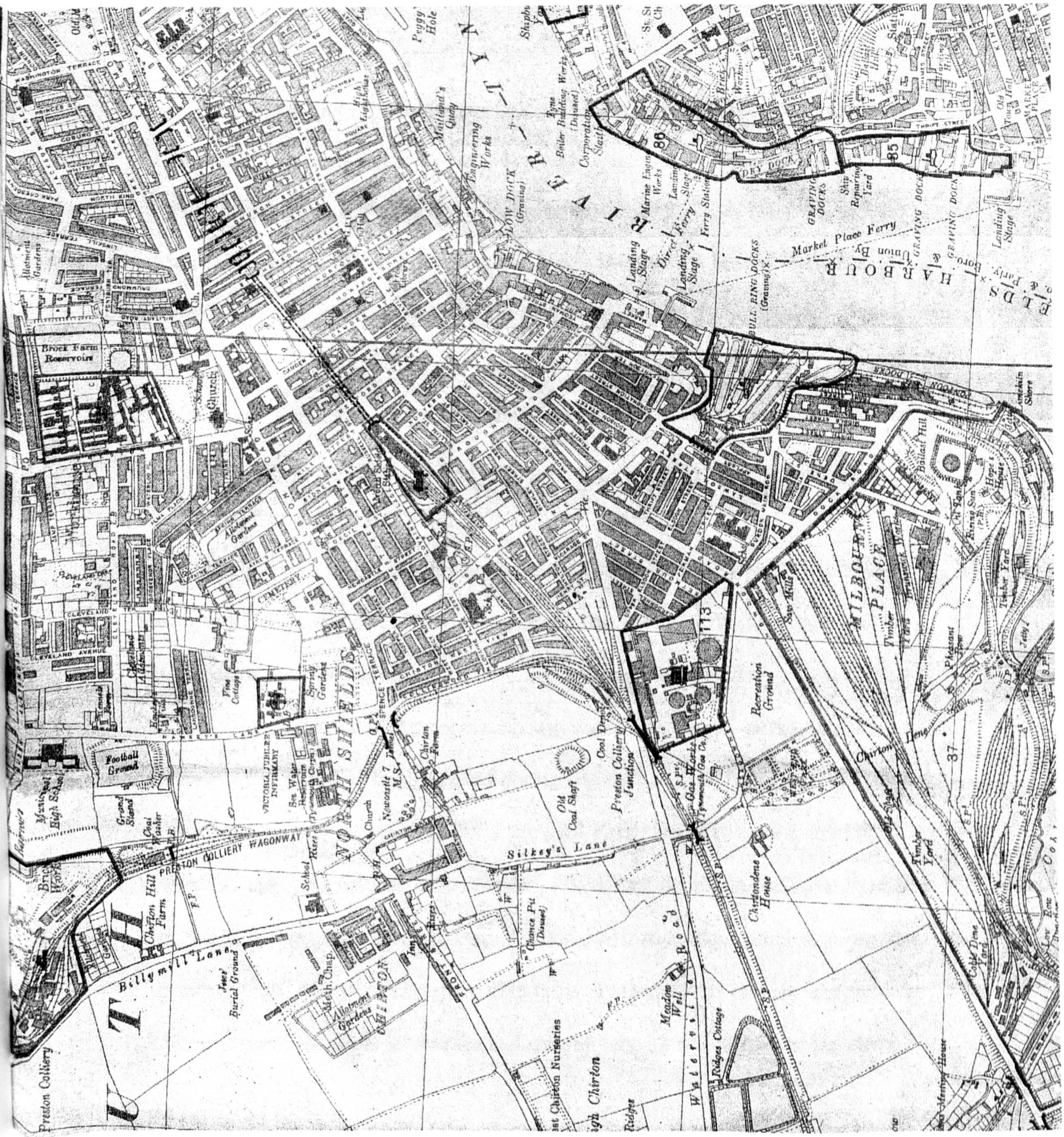
[674] North East Diary 1939-1945 website [http://www.bpears.org.uk/NE-Diary/], 2004.
[675] See Map 4, overleaf.



Map 4: Stadtplan (Target Plan) of North Shields, Tynemouth, and South Shields.[673]

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[673] TWAS: DX111. German plan of military targets adapted from 6" Ordnance Survey Map.

The first police casualty to be suffered in the area came in particularly tragic circumstances at South Shields on February 16th 1941. A Heinkel He III bomber had been shot down over the town during a raid which claimed the lives of three civilians. The aircraft crashed into the town after being hit by anti-aircraft fire and subsequent collision with a barrage balloon cable. The crew were killed in the crash (there are reports that one managed to bail out but was electrocuted when his parachute hit power lines) and, to maintain security, a guard was mounted on the wreckage. A parachute mine that was still on board the aircraft exploded 25 minutes later. Police Constable Leslie Lamb was killed, alongside an Auxiliary Fireman. Two other Auxiliaries died of their injuries shortly afterwards (the three dead firemen were George Renwick, Albert Purvis, and John Whalton). A further seventeen members of the police or fire services were injured, in many cases seriously.[677]

The reaction to the first fatalities in the area seems to have been muted; it seems that whilst there was obvious sadness the prevalent opinion was one of determination to carry on with normal life as much as possible. Despite this determination the morale of the population was undermined when measures designed to protect them failed. This happened during the next raid on Newcastle just after midnight on the morning of July 29th. Air raid sirens failed to sound and bombs, dropped in the space of just three minutes, killed four people including a popular member of the local community, Mary Mackay, who was fatally injured at Heaton Secondary Girls' School whilst attempting to warn others of the danger. Anger was directed towards the local authorities and the military for the failure of the air raid sirens and this was a common re-occurrence on Tyneside whenever measures were deemed to have been inadequate. Possibly the best example of this anger could be

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[677] *Ibid.*

seen in the reaction to an attack carried out on the Walker Naval Yard on the 27th of January 1941 when a lone raider managed to get inland undetected. It dropped several bombs inside the yard, narrowly missing an aircraft carrier that was under construction and injuring several of the workmen. At no point did the sirens sound. There were also strenuous protests that there was no return anti-aircraft fire directed at the raider. Workers went on to demand better protection in letters to the local press and the authorities capitulated when they admitted that measures would seem to have been lax.[678] It would seem that the residents of Tyneside tolerated the threat of enemy air raids and were not unduly demoralised by casualties, but they quickly became indignant if they believed that more could be done to protect them, their property or their livelihoods.

Many of those who disliked the shelters were prepared to stay in their houses during raids despite the obviously increased risk. Some even elected to watch the raids from outside their abodes, with one resident remembering the Anderson as being "at best ... damp and cold, we seldom used ours, preferring to stay outside and watch the search lights [*sic*] in action".[679] Obviously this tendency to expose oneself to danger could, and often did, lead to tragic consequences in the form of unnecessary, avoidable, casualties. Another local resident remembers seeing several people watching a raid on Newcastle, on September 1st 1941, from the balcony of a flat. A direct hit on the flat, at 57a City Road, killed all five spectators, wiping out two families.[680] Despite this the use of private dwellings as shelters continued to be popular and, for many residents of Tyneside, the air raid was the signal to take refuge in a cupboard under the stairs. The ruling that anyone who earned more than five pounds per week was not entitled to a free Anderson Shelter resulted in some people

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[678] TWAS: MD/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, February 1st 1941.
[679] Correspondence from Mrs E Carter, 2001.
[680] Correspondence from Mr G Bond, 2001.

refusing to purchase a shelter and instead rely on the structural integrity of their dwelling.[681]

As part of the continuing learning process that the nation was going through in response to aerial bombardment the experiences of separate areas around the country were shared. The results of some of the earlier bombing in other parts of the country, most notably London and Coventry, had revealed a weakness in the ARP system. If serious fires were started then it often proved impossible for the National Fire Service and the Auxiliary Fire Service to cope, especially when it came to fires in, less strategically important, purely residential areas. A partial solution was found in the recruitment and training of volunteer Fire Guards and Fire Watchers. This solution resolved two issue sin that not only did it provide some increased level of safety for people living in the suburbs but it also provided an activity which almost everyone could take part in and so increased the morale of the citizens by enhancing their feelings of importance. Local teams of Fire Guards were set up and, showing the organisational skills of the middle classes to which many of them belonged, the units were quickly organised and trained in rudimentary methods of fire fighting, using equipment such as sand bags and stirrup pumps.[682]

One of the most heavily bombed areas of Tyneside, Tynemouth Borough, suffered 253 air raid alerts up to October 1944 and had been bombed on 31 separate occasions.[683] Over 300 high explosive bombs, nineteen parachute mines and more than 18,000 incendiary bombs were dropped within the boundaries of the borough from the first incident on June 22nd 1940 to the last on March 25th 1943. The borough suffered 225 fatalities with a further 475 persons being injured, 150 of them

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[681] Correspondence from Mrs P Blaylock, 2001.
[682] TWAS: DX385/1/2-13. Newcastle Home Guard and Civil Defence files re: Fire Guards, 1941.
[683] *The Shields Evening News,* October 13th 1944, p 5.

severely.[684] Individual tragedies, where many were killed, such as in North Shields in May 1941, shocked the entire area and sapped morale in the immediate locality for the short term.

The people of the area were required make many adjustments catering to specific wartime occurrences, but, the most memorable experience remains that of the bombing raids that affected the area. Whilst the area was not as heavily bombed as many other parts of Britain, it did suffer substantial raiding, especially in the winter of 1940 and throughout 1941. The pattern of bombing on Tyneside was one that gave rise to concern amongst those responsible for the upkeep of morale. There were extended periods of little or no enemy activity with these lulls being broken by heavy raids or, especially in 1941, a series of raids spread over several days. It was thought that it was this pattern of attack that had the greatest effect on morale, because people had little opportunity to adjust to any particular pattern of attack, and were thus prone to becoming more shaken. Although other areas, such as Merseyside, suffered more substantial attacks, the sixteen large raids on Tyneside made it the second most heavily raided area in the country during this period.[685] This was a configuration of attacks that, at least as far as the first three years of the war were concerned, was not to be found in the south of the country. The people of Tyneside, by and large, appear to have successfully made this adjustment to their lives.

Throughout the spring of 1941 there was a protracted series of heavy raids that affected the areas alongside the River Tyne. The residents of this area rapidly became accustomed to spending entire nights in their air raid shelters, listening to the deafening sounds of anti-aircraft fire, the shriek of falling bombs and the explosions as land mines levelled entire streets. This was the wartime experience that many had

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[684] *Ibid.*
[685] Harrisson, T, *Living through the Blitz* (London: Penguin, 1990), pp 234-242.

expected before the war had begun but as it became obvious that casualties were not as great as pre-war estimates had predicted the people of Tyneside showed that they were just as resilient as those in other parts of the country. For those who lived in the most heavily bombed areas this was the key formative experience of their wartime lives.

A most severe air raid took place during the night of April 9th and the early hours of April 10th 1941. This attack saw heavy bombing aimed primarily at the docks and industrial areas stretching from Newcastle upon Tyne, although there was also reports of bombs falling as far west as Wylam, downstream to the mouth of the river at Tynemouth and along the coast as far north as Whitley Bay. The Tyneside public was given warning of the approaching raid by the usual public warning system at 11.25 pm and the beginning of the raid itself was marked by the dropping of incendiaries and a small number of high explosive bombs on Tynemouth and North Shields. This was a substantial and sustained attack which lasted some five and a half hours. The after-raid report determined that approximately 35 high explosive bombs were dropped in the Tynemouth/North Shields vicinity along with thousands of incendiary devices, a large proportion of them containing explosive charges.[686] The majority of high explosive bombs that were dropped were of a very large capacity and many of them created craters averaging 70 to 80 feet in diameter and 25 foot in depth. Blast damage was, unsurprisingly, extensive. Five bombs, in fact probably parachute mines, were even more powerful and left craters 120 feet in diameter and over 30 feet deep. Across the river in South Shields the raid killed 13 people and left another 73 injured. Three unexploded bombs in the vicinity of the Dean Estate resulted in the evacuation of 300 people. The Stanhope Road Rest Centre was opened and the

[686] TWAS: T15. Report by T Blackburn, Chief Constable and ARP Controller, to the Emergency Committee of Tynemouth Borough Council regarding the air raid of April 9th / 10th 1941, April 17th 1941.

decision was made to "keep this centre open for four or five days until the bombs had been dealt with."[687]

The main targets of the attack in this area were the wood-yards, and oil tanks, on the north bank of the river.[688] These were substantially damaged and, at one point, a fire over a mile in length developed. The Tynemouth and North Shields area that had suffered bombing already suffered casualties again this night with 35 fatalities and over 100 injuries. The ARP and Civil Defence Services paid a heavy price in the area on this night, largely because they were actively carrying out their duties throughout the raid. Two police officers were killed in Front Street, Tynemouth when a police box was hit and nine other police officers were injured to varying degrees. In addition to this there were eighteen Civil Defence personnel injured and two First Aid workers, who were based in Whitley Bay but were responding to a call for assistance, were killed when their ambulance received a direct hit. The female ambulance driver, Miss Doris Ewbank, was a school teacher at the nearby Backworth Infants School and the news of her death was never widely reported in case it sparked a withdrawal of female volunteers from the Voluntary Aid Detachment.[689] Miss Ewbank is however remembered on the Whitley Bay war memorial, the only civilian thereupon, and on plaques at Panama Gardens and in St Mary's Church, both in her home town.

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[687] TWAS: T179/338. South Shields County Borough Council, Clerks Department (ARP minutes book), May 5th 1939 – November 25th 1941, ARP Emergency Committee meeting, April 10th 1941, p 175.
[688] Seen clearly marked at the right side of map i, bordering the river.
[689] *Whitley Bay News Guardian*, June 13th 2002, p 1.

Figure 18. Plaque to Doris Ewbank, Panama Gardens, Whitley Bay.[690]

Aside from the substantial numbers of casualties, the blast and fire damage done to the area's property was also considerable. 63 buildings were demolished with a further 612 being damaged, many of them seriously. The medical facilities of the vicinity were seriously affected as, in addition to the destroyed ambulance, Preston Hospital was also hit and partially demolished, three members of staff and one patient were killed, and the area's First Aid Headquarters, at Holmlands (near the school and church just off Albion Road), was severely damaged and rendered inoperable by a high explosive bomb which detonated very close to the building. Other serious incidents occurring this night included the direct hit on the Royal National Lifeboat Station, which was destroyed, and the destruction of an Anderson Shelter killing all four occupants. The conflagration that developed in the timber yards resulted in outside assistance being called in from Newburn, Gosforth, Whitley Bay and Blyth. Soldiers were also drafted in to help in the effort. The fire was of such ferocity that it

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[690] From the author's own collection.

was not controlled until 2 pm the next day and was not fully extinguished for another four hours after that.[691]

The latter part of the raid, which consisted purely of incendiary bombs, spread upriver to Newcastle upon Tyne and at approximately four o'clock in the morning more than 50 aircraft attacked the north and west of the city, causing widespread damage. 68 separate fires developed and 300 troops were called out to assist the fire services. As a result of their attempts to fight the fires 19 fire-fighters were injured. This attack was aimed primarily at the Scotswood factory of Vickers-Armstrongs but, despite several fires being started, surprisingly little damage was done. Across the river, at South Shields, the attack was equally ferocious with severe fires threatening several important shipyards, docks, and engineering companies. The risk was so great that fire-fighting teams arrived to assist from as far away as Middlesbrough. Despite these efforts a great deal of damage was sustained at the Redhead's Shipyard. Civilian casualties were, once again, severe with 25 killed and 76 injured. Numbered amongst these casualties again were several ARP and Civil Defence workers.[692] An auxiliary fireman, Matthew Priestley, was killed at Redhead's and ten of his colleagues injured, whilst two wardens and a policemen were also injured. A further two AFS men, this time including one of those who were offering assistance from Sunderland, were overcome by fumes and died. Other areas on Tyneside also suffered heavily during this raid with a further 24 being killed in Jarrow.

This was followed up by further heavy raids, and smaller scale nuisance attacks, throughout the month. Five nights later an attack on the same areas killed eighteen civilians in the Whitley Bay and Tynemouth area. Extensive damage was

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[691] TWAS: T15. Report by T Blackburn, Chief Constable and ARP Controller, to the Emergency Committee of Tynemouth Borough Council regarding the air raid of April 9th / 10th 1941, April 17th 1941.

[692] North East Diary 1939-1945 website [http://www.bpears.org.uk/NE-Diary/], 2004.

caused to property as a result of the large numbers of parachute mines that were used in this attack and the clearing up process took a considerable amount of time. The official report claimed that hundreds of houses and shops were damaged and several hundred local residents rendered homeless. The heaviest casualties of the night were Ocean View, Whitley Bay, where sixteen people were killed, including four members of the same family. A further 90 people were injured in Whitley Bay and one of the dead was not discovered until a week later and remained unidentified.[693] In North Shields, a warden post at the Rex Cinema was demolished when a parachute mine impacted at Billy Mill Lane. A Firewatcher and a Warden were killed at this latter site and the army had to be called in to direct traffic whilst the clean up and rescue effort continued.

This ghastly month for the people of Tyneside was to continue with a further heavy raid on the night of the 25th that resulted in 79 further civilian fatalities. Almost half of these were as a result of one incident when a parachute mine destroyed much of Guildford Place, Heaton, killing 35 people with a further nine being killed in the neighbouring street, Cheltenham Terrace. Several families were decimated in this incident and the search for bodies continued for nearly a week. Several bodies could not be identified and, as a result, were buried in a mass grave at Heaton Cemetery.[694]

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[693] TWAS: MB/WB/27/1 (T135/45). Reports of Whitley Bay Urban District Council (ARP Committee), April 18th 1941.
[694] Newcastle City Library, *Newcastle at War* (Newcastle upon Tyne: City Libraries and Arts, 1992), p 20.

Figure 19. The clearing up process in Guildford Place after the raid of April 25th 1941.[695]

Despite the severity of this raid the events that had occurred were to become a relatively common occurrence for the people of Tyneside. The disruption that was caused was at times substantial but for most the response to the air raids was simply to try to get on with as normal a life as possible. Some lessons were learned from this raid however. A report submitted to Newcastle's Public Assistance Officer analysed the functioning of the rest centres in South Shields and found several faults. Foremost amongst these was the fact that details of people who entered the centres were not taken efficiently and there was little or no provision for adequate lavatory facilities.[696] It was through learning processes such as these that the people of Tyneside gradually adapted themselves more fully to wartime conditions.

Over the course of the war South Shields received approximately half the number of bombs which fell on Tynemouth and suffered some 156 fatalities, 564

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[695] Photograph © Newcastle Chronicle and Journal Ltd.

[696] TWAS: 359/794(5). Emergency Shelters/Feeding Centres. Report to the Public Assistance Officer of Newcastle Council detailing the lessons to be learned from the raid on South Shields on the night of April 9th / 10th 1941, April 16th 1941.

injuries and over 3,000 homeless.[697] These communities, despite being shocked at the enormity of their losses on several occasions, seemed to develop a sense of pride commensurate with those of other blitzed areas of the country such as the East End of London and Coventry. It would seem that the powerful imagery worked around the ability to 'take' enemy bombing by the MoI had an effect on some areas of Tyneside comparable to other parts of the country.

In total, the Tyneside area would appear to have suffered at least 719 civilian fatalities due to enemy action and many more people were injured or rendered homeless.[698] The raids on Tyneside were characterised by long periods of inaction followed by short but savage bursts of attacks that were often sustained over several days. The types of raids experienced by Tyneside meant that casualties when they came tended to be in fairly large numbers and this resulted in momentary, and highly regionalised, drops in morale but these were quickly abated by the prompt reactions of those organisation whose duty it was to aid those affected by raiding. Personalised accounts of air raids are becoming harder to obtain but from those reports that are available it would appear that the vast majority of the people of Tyneside did 'pull together' in an effort reinforcing the belief in a community spirit.

Owing to the randomness that characterised much of the Luftwaffe bombing it could be expected that casualties would be from a broad representation of society as a whole and an analysis of the available civilian casualty figures for Tyneside would appear, at first glance, to reinforce this view. There are, however, some points that need to be explained. More males were killed by enemy action than females, 402 (56%) compared to 317 (44%). This would at first appear to be somewhat surprising given that it could reasonably be expected that many males would have been serving

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[697] *The Shields Evening News*, October 13th 1944, p 5.
[698] Information culled from Index to the "Civilian War Dead Roll of Honour" for Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire website [http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/Indexes/NE_WarDead/], 2004.

abroad and that those who were left would more often be at work where shelter facilities tended to be more adequate than in the home. Conversely, the proportion of men in the ARP services and the Home Guard was, of course, considerably greater than female. This placed these men in greater danger as they were expected to be on duty and active during air raids.

The danger that was faced by the ARP workers, various fire services and others, who were expected to be on duty during alerts, can be seen by the fact that some 130 (or 18% of the total casualties) were killed on Tyneside during the course of the war. It would appear that the ARP workers, Firemen and the Home Guard, faced the greatest dangers. People from these services accounted for 78% of those civilians who were killed in the line of duty on Tyneside.

In other aspects the randomness of the bombing is proven. The range of ages of those killed on Tyneside stretches from babies under one-year of age to several people who were 87 at the time of their deaths.[699] By far the greatest concentration of deaths occurred in the 36-65 age bracket (42%), followed by those in the range 16-35 (30%). Older persons made up a surprisingly small percentage of the total casualties (just 9%) in the area. This is somewhat surprising given that, it would appear, it was these people who were both more vulnerable to the effects of shock and to demonstrate a reluctance to move from their homes to the air raid shelters. Looking at the combinations of age and gender it can be seen that proportionately more males in the 36-65 age bracket were killed than females. Males in this bracket formed 44% of the total male casualties compared to just 39% of female casualties being in this bracket. Conversely, more females between the ages of 16 and 35 died than did similarly aged men. Men aged 16-35 represented 28% of the total male casualties.

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[699] See Appendix C, Table viii.

This can be explained by the fact that many more men of this younger age group became members of the armed forces and were thus not present in their native area. The older men tended not to be called up until much later in the war, if at all, and a greater proportion of this age group consisted of men who were employed in reserved occupations, of which there were many on Tyneside. This goes part of the way to explain why this older age group of men suffered disproportionate casualties.

Tyneside, and indeed Newcastle upon Tyne itself, whilst not as heavily bombed as some other areas, was damaged and, contrary to the opinion of Calder,[700] suffered, at times, extensive damage. The area was bombed on numerous occasions and suffered many more false alerts which, nonetheless, forced the area's inhabitants into their shelters and increased anxiety. In addition to the human casualties the damage that was, at times, inflicted on the area's infrastructure especially in the coastal locations alongside the river was severe. Tynemouth, for example, had lost five percent of its total rateable value due solely to enemy bombing and the area was allocated emergency supplies of steel for reconstruction purposes.[701] The damage sustained by the major industrial concerns was fairly light, although buildings needed to be replaced, however, at no time was the industrial productivity of the area seriously affected. Damage to infrastructure was more lasting and the estimated repair bill for damage to schools and catering facilities in Tynemouth Borough alone came to £18,636.11s.1d. (£745,462 today)[702] The abilities of the local authorities to repair war damage varied and whilst all efforts were made to repair damage to housing and public facilities there were often shortfalls due to the limited amount of labour and funds that was available. When work had to be carried out it is clear that

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[700] Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 220.
[701] TWAS: T15/1494A. Tynemouth Borough Council ARP Files 1938-1951, Re: reconstruction.
[702] *Ibid.*

local authorities were actively considering the future.[703] Indeed, they appointed a reconstruction committee to ascertain the requirements of the local community and to act accordingly.[704] It is clear however that central government was increasingly reluctant to fund repair work and procedures for obtaining funding very often became bogged down in red tape; the funding for repairs to damage at North Shields fish quay, for example, had still not been settled in October 1947.[705] Once again the local authorities on Tyneside were falling victim to the lack of understanding in central government.

Adjusting to War – the Austere Road to Victory

During the First World War the issue of food consumption and supply had remained a minor issue until the impact of unrestricted submarine warfare began to have a major effect on supplies during 1916. The remaining two years of the conflict were characterised in Britain by rising food prices, shortages, and queuing. Indeed, by 1918 food prices (bread had doubled in price between 1913 and 1917) and shortages had become the foremost motivator of industrial unrest whilst workers were taking time off to relieve their wives who were queuing for food.[706] However, the crisis that brought about rationing was not caused by war related shortages, indeed the harvest of 1917 was a good one, but as a result of the irrational panic buying that emptied the

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[703] For a more complete discussion of rebuilding policy see Woodbury, C, 'Britain Begins to Rebuild Her Cities', *The American Political Science Review*, 41, 5 (1947), pp 901-920.
[704] TWAS: T15/1494A. Tynemouth Borough Council ARP Files 1938-1951, Minutes from interview with Regional Manager, War Damage Committee, September 19th 1941.
[705] Ibid, Tynemouth Borough Council ARP Files 1938-1951, Re: reconstruction.
[706] Marwick, A, *The Deluge*, p 208.

shops.[707] By June 1917 the government had assumed total control of all imports and was also supervising home-based production. Rationing, of sugar, fats, and meat, was not imposed until the final year of the war, although the system did continue until 1920. The rationing system of the First World War was based on a 'fair shares for all' proposal that was driven by an individual flat rate ration. It also required that customers register with a local supplier for each rationed good. These retailers then received supplies of goods according to the numbers that they had on their registers. The scheme was a success and served to improve the working-class diet and to reduce the wastage of food.[708]

After the First World War the Committee of Imperial Defence was given the role of investigating food controls in the event of a future war. The Committee recognised that valuable lessons had been learned during the First World War and that a policy of 'business as usual', as had been in place for the first years of the First World War, was completely unworkable in relation to a modern total war situation. Policies concerning food controls during the Second World War were heavily influenced by the British experiences of the First World War. The successes of the food control scheme of the First World War remained fresh in the memories of many of those who were now confronted by an outwardly appearing similar situation. Foremost amongst those influenced by previous policy was Sir William Beveridge who chaired the highly influential 1936 Sub-Committee on Food Supply in Time of War and was also the first permanent secretary to the Ministry of Food. The final report of Beveridge's Sub-Committee emphasised that any future policy of rationing would only succeed if "each consumer was assured his or her share."[709]

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[707] Taylor, A J P, *English History 1914-1945*, p 95.
[708] DeGroot, G, *Blighty*, p 91.
[709] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I, *Austerity in Britain. Rationing, Controls, and Consumption 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p 13.

The proposed scheme of rationing and controls in the event of a future war was so complex that it was imperative that plans were made in advance. In order to facilitate this planning the Board of Trade Food (Defence Plans) Department was formed. This department organised the planning of both a scheme of supply control and methods of regulating consumer demand. As part of the plan the country was separated into regions and the Local Authorities were asked to establish local food control committees whilst Divisional Food Officers were appointed to administer the system during war.

In order to successfully adjust the national economy onto a total war footing it was imperative that civilian consumption be substantially slowed. It was strategically vital to reduce the expenditure of vital materials such as food, petrol, cloth and metal. This was because a reduction in the amounts of such materials being imported would be inevitable in wartime. Alongside this was the fact that shipping and manufacturing space previously taking up in the import or production of such goods would be required for the import or production of vital wartime materials. The government quickly came to the conclusion that the curtailment of personal consumption was vital if the economy of the country was to be maintained on a wartime basis. Rationing and other controls were utilised primarily to facilitate control over the consumption rates of the general public and, therefore, the national economy. In this respect the system was certainly effective in that, by 1942, "consumer spending had fallen by about 15 per cent".[710] Rationing seen as necessary in order to remedy, or prevent, shortages, it was also seen as being pivotal in the prevention of food queues, the restriction of unfair price inflation, and in ensuring fair distribution of available goods.

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[710] Ibid, p 10.

There were, of course, other reasons behind the policy of rationing. Central government sought to avoid past mistakes and to avert possibly invidious emotions caused by the perception of an unequal sharing of the wartime burden. The public were encouraged through several speeches and propaganda campaigns to believe that the policy was concerned primarily with ensuring fair shares for all. "The fair shares policy was critical in maintaining morale on the home front".[711] There was widespread support for the notion of fair shares for all amongst the general public. Public responses to rationing, however, are multifaceted and influenced by factors such as gender, class, or regional perceptions. Many remained suspicious of the rationing and controls policies and were unconvinced by the supposed equality of the system. "Fair shares was a compelling slogan but at times there were widespread doubts whether sacrifice was in fact equally shared".[712]

The restrictions imposed by maintaining a flat rate of ration resulted in several anomalies. For example, the system "ignored the diverse needs of heavy workers", who comprised a substantial proportion of the Tyneside public. Criticisms of this nature were turned aside by the belief that in the event of war it would be necessary to ration only a very small number of items. The grumbles of many Tyneside industrial workers regarding the meagreness of their allotted ration would, no doubt, have been magnified if they had been aware that pre-war plans had included "differential rationing and supplementary ration books were prepared for ... heavy workers who were to receive additional bacon and meat."[713] These proposals were, however, to remain unused throughout the war. The widespread discontent over the fairness of the ration that was to repeatedly surface on Tyneside could surely have been, to some extent, alleviated by schemes such as the proposed differential ration.

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[711] *Ibid.*
[712] *Ibid*, p 2.
[713] *Ibid*, p 14.

Registration with a specific retailer for a specified product resulted in the reduction of consumer freedom but was necessary if one wanted to be assured of receiving his or her allotted ration. Unfortunately the scheme did not take into account the migration of population that wartime conditions forced upon many people. Even movements within the Tyneside area could result in people having to change their supplier and re-register. This was a process that occupied valuable time and could cause organisational chaos.

Figure 20. Householders applying to change their designated retailers at Newcastle Food Control Office, 1941.[714]

Rationing began, after governmental indecision had delayed it, in January 1940 with the imposition of butter and sugar restrictions. These were followed in quick succession by the rationing of meat and sugar and, by July 1941, the ration had extended to cover tea, margarine, and cooking fats. Preserves and cheeses were added to the rationed goods list in 1941. The importance of rationing in the wartime experience cannot be overestimated, on Tyneside, as throughout Britain, in "contrast

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[714] Photograph © Newcastle Chronicle and Journal Ltd.

with air raids or evacuation, rationing and shortages affected everybody".[715] The austerity measures that were a direct result of rationing were accepted by the vast majority of the Tyneside public and were viewed as a necessity of war. This view was reinforced by the favour that was shown to the theory of fair shares for all and dissatisfaction was most often the result of perceived inequalities within the system. The extensive propaganda campaign, exhorting the public to be stoically self sacrificing appears to have been largely successful.

Growing shortages throughout 1940 and 1941 resulted in an increasing public discontent over what was seen as uneven distribution of those foodstuffs that had remained un-rationed. The public maintained their faith in the rationing system's ability to deliver fair shares for all. This was demonstrated by the increasingly vociferous calls for items such as canned and processed foods, dried fruit, and other commodities to be added to the rationing system. Shortages of eggs on Tyneside were a constant complaint and the situation was only eased when eggs were later added to the rationed goods list.[716] The Tyneside public were comparable with the national situation in that, throughout the early years of the war, they wanted more goods placed on the ration list in order to ensure fair shares. This was largely because of a perception in the area that restaurants and hotels were "cornering supplies of un-rationed commodities."[717]

On Tyneside the shortages were beginning to be felt as early as April 1940 when the local police force noticed increasing concerns over the shortages of both eggs, which were not rationed, and beef, which had been rationed only the previous month.[718] As the war intensified the Tyneside public appear to have been more

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[715] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I, *Austerity*, p 60.
[716] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, June 20th 1941.
[717] *Ibid*, July 15th 1941.
[718] *Ibid*, April 25th 1940.

willing to accept scarcities and rationing. So that, by September 1940, it was said that the majority of the public accepted the shortages of eggs and the meagreness of the butter ration as "a fact of the wartime economy."[719]

It is clear from the records on Tyneside that the public grew increasingly irritable if shortages of a particular commodity continued for several consecutive weeks. This is reflected in that after shortages of eggs continued into October complaints about both this and, once again, the meagre butter ration surface with renewed vigour.[720] Grievances regarding shortages of meat, eggs, and onions, continued on into the first few months of 1941.[721] In common with national norms the meagre supply of onions was a longstanding complaint on Tyneside.[722] Although this was the worst period of the war it would seem that the shortages were still not fully accepted by the Tyneside public despite the earlier optimism of the police intelligence reports. Indeed, the situation on Tyneside was worsening with an "increasing level of dissatisfaction [being voiced] over the uneven distribution of food."[723]

It would appear that the shortages had reached such a level that the Tyneside public were beginning to lose faith in the entire system of 'fair shares for all' rationing. More worryingly for the authorities, this was further demonstrated by the founding in March 1941 of the, BCP supported, Newcastle Housewives Guild. This organisation began to campaign for greater supplies of foodstuffs. Complaints were, however, in proportion and seldom approached levels of concern. In common with national surveys the main focus of complaints on Tyneside were based on the

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[719] *Ibid*, September 27th 1940.
[720] *Ibid*, October 25th 1940.
[721] *Ibid*, January 4th 1941 – March 1st 1941.
[722] Longmate, N, *How We Lived Then. A history of everyday life during the Second World War* (London: Arrow, 1973), pp 144-145.
[723] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, March 1st 1941.

inequalities and profiteering that the system permitted. Complaints also arose over the quality of meat that was being made available for human consumption and by May 1940 these complaints had reached such a level that the matter was being discussed by the Newcastle, Gateshead and District Butchers' Association.[724].

This situation was not greatly relieved until the 'Dig for Victory' campaign started to partially alleviate the supply situation, with increasing numbers of people growing their own foodstuffs. After this crisis period it would appear that the food supply situation was largely resolved, with only minor complaints over shortages of fish and fruit being mentioned in later intelligence reports. The families of fishermen were in a privileged position as they invariably obtained enough fish not only to feed themselves but to barter with friends and neighbours for other goods.[725] The rising price of fish, a stone of haddock had more than quadrupled in price by 1941,[726] combined with this, led to ill feeling in Tyneside fishing ports, such as North Shields, where many of the trawler men had been members of the Royal Navy Reserve and were called up at the outbreak of war whilst others, who were perhaps not so patriotic, made huge profits.[727] In North Shields, boats that in pre-war years would return with catches worth perhaps £100 (£4,000 today) were instead earning up to £1,700 (£68,000 today) per trip.[728] The increases in the price of fish were down to the simple fact that there fewer boats were putting out to sea. At North Shields the number dropped from 84 in July 1939 to just seventeen by December 1941, a decrease of 80%.[729] Equitable distribution of fish was to prove a major problem throughout the

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[724] TWAS: TU/BA/1/1. Newcastle, Gateshead and District Butchers' Association, minutes, May 27th 1940, p 399.
[725] Interview, NS/RA2, 2001.
[726] Calder, A, *The People's War*, p 416.
[727] Interview, NS/RA1, 2001.
[728] Calder, A, *The People's War*, pp 415-416.
[729] Robinson, R, *Trawling. The Rise and Fall of the British Trawl Fishery* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), p 176.

war with no decent solution being discovered.[730] Of course, despite the hugely increased profits they made, the life of the deep-sea fisherman during war was also massively dangerous and at least "1,243 British fishermen lost their lives whilst following their livelihood during the war."[731] The trawler crews also performed acts of great bravery in saving the crews of stricken vessels and RAF aircrew. In March 1941 the Grimsby trawler *Pelican* limped into the Tyne having carried out a daring rescue of crew from the 6,809 ton *SS Somali* which had been attacked by German aircraft and was left blazing off the Farne Islands.[732]

It was not only the deep-sea fishing industry that was affected by the war. The increasing prices of fish affected the luxury end of the market, such as salmon and sea-trout. In 1939, which was described as a "fairly satisfactory season",[733] the price of salmon at North Shields Fish Market stood at 1s.9d. per pound whilst that of sea-trout was 1s.6d. per pound.[734] Five years later the price of salmon was 3s.5d. per pound and that of sea-trout 3s.3d. per pound. To make matters worse there were fewer amounts of fish being landed by the shore nets due to combinations of poor weather and the reduction in the number of men who applied for net licenses. In 1939 there were 47 licenses granted but by 1944 this total had decreased to just eighteen.[735] Pollution, although improving, was also said to be a major factor in the paucity of catches; on more than half the days that water quality was monitored there was no detectable oxygen in the sample.[736]

The most serious complaint of the later war period would appear to have arisen around March 1942 when there were complaints that green vegetables were

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[730] Longmate, N, *How We Lived Then*, pp 142-143.
[731] Robinson, R, *Trawling*, p 185.
[732] *Ibid*, pp 178-179.
[733] TWAS: G/TFB/1/1. Tyne Fishery Board: annual reports and yearbooks, 1939-1944, p 15.
[734] *Ibid*, p 14.
[735] *Ibid*, pp 14-15.
[736] *Ibid*, pp 20-21.

only available to those who could "afford them".[737] It is perhaps significant that a memo from the Ministry of Food was sent to Newcastle Corporation at this time saying that a door to door survey into food supplies would be carried out in May.[738] Further problems arose when previously self-sufficient allotment holders, attempting to purchase food, were forced to complain that local greengrocers were refusing to serve them as they had not been registered as customers with them during previous years. However, by September 1944 the region's food stocks were sufficient to provide adequate food for its own population but also for large numbers of evacuees from the south of the country.[739]

As has been previously stated, one of the key aims of the rationing system was to ensure that there would be no unfair and restrictive price increases. On Tyneside this aspect of the policy would appear to have failed as one of the most consistent complaints throughout the war regarding rationing concerns the perceived profiteering of some retailers when goods were scarce. The price of rabbit meat in Newcastle upon Tyne was described, in 1941, as being widely affected by "profiteering".[740] As well as this there was no guarantee that the meat was fit for consumption due to the unethical practices of some shopkeepers. One young woman queued for over four hours just to purchase a rabbit and some biscuits. Despite her determination, when she returned home, she discovered that the rabbit was rotten and inedible.[741] Some retailers demonstrated favouritism towards certain customers and sale of under the counter goods was commonplace. A young boy at the time recalled a greengrocer declaring to his mother that he had no fruit and then later giving a large bag of fruit to

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[737] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, March 27th 1942.
[738] Ministry of Food memorandum, April 30th 1942, in *ibid.*
[739] *Ibid*, September 19th 1944.
[740] *Ibid*, January 18th 1941.
[741] Correspondence from Mrs M Playle, 2001.

a woman who had no children.[742] Such unfairness and cheating of the system would appear to have been relatively commonplace, despite the fact that it was illegal.

Another key aim of the policy was to ensure that there would be no need for food queues. The authorities viewed food queues as anathema, and in 1941 the phenomenon of queuing was described as being "a bigger menace to public morale than several serious German air raids".[743] Yet, on Tyneside, the policy would appear to have failed in its aim of preventing queuing from taking hold. Queues, not only for food but for commodities such as stockings, were being described as commonplace in the area from the first months of 1941.[744] Queues were most prevalent in the working class areas of Tyneside as people attempted to obtain meagre supplies and attempted to "make the coupons stretch as far as [they] could." It was common for people to travel from places such as Wallsend to Newcastle queue for hours at a time to obtain some commodities.[745] For the authorities queues were a bad sign, it was believed that they encouraged the spreading of rumours and gossip and generally lowered morale. Despite some people having positive memories of queuing (indeed it can be argued that queues were simply an extension of the 'community spirit' of the time), there were examples of queues leading to negative, sometimes even violent, behaviour. One man, then a young boy living in Hebburn Colliery, remembers a "traumatic experience" when queuing for cakes and pies at a local bakery shop when the delivery van held insufficient supplies for all. After queuing for four hours the scene turned threatening, with anger being directed towards the manageress of the bakery, who was forced to lock herself inside the shop, until a fair solution was worked out.[746] The fact that there were such protests serves to qualify "the myth of the home front

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[742] Anonymous correspondence, 2001.
[743] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I, *Austerity*, p 66.
[744] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, March 29th 1941.
[745] Correspondence from Mrs M Playle, 2001.
[746] Correspondence from Mr N Wilson, 2001.

characterized by universal sacrifice, egalitarianism, and common purpose".[747] Queuing became so prevalent in working class areas of Tyneside that people were compelled to wait for several hours to obtain commodities such as fat for cooking and stockings always drew large crowds of women. In North Shields people even queued outside a tripe factory to obtain cooking fat.[748]

Rationing had a large impact on the children of Tyneside during the war. With the rationing of sugar came a rationing of sweets and cakes, whilst lack of fresh fruit meant that many Tyneside children growing up during the war had little recollection of what an orange looked like. This was a national norm, one doctor in Westmoreland was called out to a suspected appendicitis only to discover that the child had eaten her first orange and, never having seen one before, had eaten it peel and all.[749] Obtaining extra sweet coupons from a relative or friend became the highlight of many children's war. Children with spare pocket money clubbed together to share sweets whilst the first day of the new butter ration was anticipated for the thicker than usual layers of butter on the bread, the greyish-brown national loaf which was much disliked, at breakfast.[750] Some children supplemented their ration through theft and local farmers were plagued by the pilfering of turnips and apples. One man, a young boy in North Shields at the time, recalls frequent hunger motivated trips to the farm at Preston Village to steal turnips.[751]

Worries over the deterioration of children's diet due to rationing were one of the foremost concerns shared by both the general public and by the government. By 1941 eggs and milk, whilst not officially rationed, had become controlled goods.

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[747] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I, *Austerity*, p 61.
[748] North Shields Library website [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk/Memories/memory_1.html], April 2004.
[749] Longmate, N, *How We Lived Then*, p 145.
[750] *Ibid.*
[751] Interview, NS/RA2, 2001.

Eighteen per cent of the country's milk supply was set aside for priority goods.[752] This was a measure largely designed to ensure an adequately balanced diet for the most vulnerable groups in society. This vulnerable group included expectant mothers, recent mothers, adolescents, and invalids but, it was primarily aimed at young children. The result of increased supplies for children did result in the government being unable to guarantee items for ordinary people, due to seasonal and regional fluctuation. Despite these efforts the effect of rationing on children continued to be a cause for anxiety and resulted in some vulnerable groups, including children, being offered free cod-liver oil or vitamin supplements. Conditions in wartime Britain also resulted in a great increase in those children who partook of school dinners. The overall percentage of children regularly eating school meals had increased tenfold over the course of the war, 40% of children in 1945 were regular consumers of school meals.[753] Milk consumption amongst schoolchildren was simultaneously increasing. In pre-war England only 50% of children regularly drank milk whilst, by 1944, this had risen to 76%. So drastic was the increase in milk consumption that children from industrial areas of the country were, by the end of the war, consuming milk at a rate that, by pre-war standards, were the sole preserve of children from "high income groups".[754] The benefits of increased milk consumption benefited Tyneside to a greater extent than any other area. By 1944 the consumption of milk in Gateshead, Jarrow, Newcastle, and South Shields, had increased by up to 400% when compared to the figures for 1935. This contrasts with the meagre rise of five to twenty percent experienced by towns in southern England.[755]

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[752] Titmuss, R M, *Social Policy*, p 513.
[753] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I, *Austerity*, p 148.
[754] *Ibid*, p 135.
[755] Titmuss, R M, *Social Policy*, p 513.

Despite the anxieties expressed by both government and many parents, the system of wartime rationing would seem to have been largely beneficial for children's health, especially those who came from working class homes. The British Medical Association (B.M.A.) reported that, when compared to the pre-war data, children in 1944 were both taller and heavier; a sign of better overall health standards. However, rates of death from tuberculosis had increased when compared to pre-war figures and this remained a major concern for the B.M.A. Despite this one, albeit large concern, anthropometric survey clearly indicated that there were significant improvements in the general health of children during the war and that, as well as the increase in mean heights and weights, there was a "substantial improvement in child health ... as well as the virtual elimination of many of the extreme forms of physical disability".[756]

Of course, it was not only foodstuffs that were rationed and the rationing of household goods and other commodities adversely affected the people of Tyneside. Foremost amongst these concerns was the issue of clothing. Clothing coupons were issued and people were advised to 'make do and mend' in order to preserve their clothing for longer. Almost immediately, several groups, including parents and industrial workers, began to voice their complaints over the issue. The government agreed to provide extra clothing coupons to industrial workers. At first this applied only to coal miners which resulted in another wave of protests from workers in other heavy industrial capacities. The subsequent increase in tensions was only resolved when the government agreed to give more coupons to all manual workers.[757] Parents, meanwhile, were complaining that the allocation of coupons for children was insufficient. The provision of children's footwear remained a constant source of grievance for parents on Tyneside.

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[756] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I, *Austerity*, p 139.
[757] *Ibid*, p 89.

Whilst this was a common difficulty, even during peacetime, for many working-class Tyneside families the shortages of wartime brought the problem firmly into the middle-classes. The middle-class was often the hardest hit by the rationing system. Many Tyneside working-class families were better off due to increased wages and available work alongside a guaranteed healthy diet. For the middle-class, however, the shortages resulted in the removal of peacetime norms. For example, the shortages of new prams affected the middle-class to a much greater extent than it did the working-class, who were used to making do with second hand prams or improvised solutions. Likewise, the severe restrictions imposed on toy production resulted in middle-class families suffering during Christmas, whilst those from the working-class had not been used to receiving toys in the first place.[758]

For the people of Tyneside, in common with other areas, wartime Christmases were to prove a particular tense time. The gathering of sufficient supplies for the holiday period was acutely problematic. No other period provided so many inconveniences, or provoked so much determination to maintain a cheerful atmosphere. The majority of Tyneside people were determined to have as ordinary a Christmas as normal. Nationally, the period before Christmas was one of great tension as last minute efforts ensued to acquire the necessary foodstuffs, decorations, and presents. Grumbling over "high prices and scarcity of goods" was commonplace but the first few Christmases of the war appeared to be a success. On Tyneside the festivities were described as being as normal as possible despite the public being upset at shortages of meat, eggs and onions and the prices of Christmas fowl being described as "exorbitant".[759] By 1942 the period prior to Christmas was marked by widespread discontent centred on the frequent shortages and the Ministry of

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[758] *Ibid*, pp 146-149.
[759] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, January 4th 1941.

Information registered complaints from eleven regions regarding the shortages and the prices of toys. In some areas there were allegations of "extreme profiteering" in the toy-making and retail industry.[760] Tyneside was not one of these regions. The Christmas of 1942 appears to have passed quietly in the area with little mention of any major dissatisfaction aside from the shortages of alcohol that were provoking strong criticism at the time.[761] In a national sense the two final Christmases of the war continued this established pattern of pre-holiday grumbling followed by a reasonably successful celebration. Tyneside would appear to have followed this pattern with the most serious complaints being over the scarcity of poultry and alcoholic beverages.

The shortages and the experiences associated with extensive rationing remain a fundamental wartime experience for many on Tyneside and demonstrate the willingness of the majority to accept hardship in the cause of the war effort. The grumbling and the complaints that did surface were always kept in perspective but demonstrate the fact that when the Tyneside public perceived a inequality, or when they felt too much was being asked of them, they were more than willing to take action to counter this.

Rest and Recreation

Growing weariness, as the war moved beyond the initial crisis period up to 1941, was evinced by the increasing number of petty grumbles being reported and by factors such as the worsening industrial relations. It rapidly became an imperative to provide people with entertainment despite the hardships that were enforced by the wartime

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[760] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, I, *Austerity*, p 148.
[761] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, January 16th 1942.

conditions. On industrial Tyneside this was an even more important consideration due to the importance of the dominant industries. The industrial workers of the area were forced, by wartime necessity, to work greatly increased hours under stressful, often dangerous, conditions. Travel to and from work was made more difficult due to the restrictions on public transport; the blackout added to these difficulties for those beginning or ending their shifts during periods of darkness, especially in winter. Rationing, air raid warnings, and the restriction of public house opening hours further limited the opportunities for entertainment and recreation. All of these factors combined to erode morale and, perhaps more worryingly, caused a lessening effectiveness in the workplace with detrimental effects on the war effort and the regional economy.

Some of the problems, such as the blackout, could not be ameliorated. However, efforts were made to lift the spirits in other ways. For example, the local authorities on Tyneside enacted several schemes under prompting from central government. These ranged from small dances to month long events that, as well as entertaining the public, served to raise money for wartime organisations (the Merchant Navy was an unsurprisingly popular organisation that benefited from such events). Themed periods were popular, the main intention being to raise funds for the armed forces. Targets for these fundraising campaigns were often ambitious. Tynemouth Borough Council intended to raise £500,000 (£20,000,000 today) with its Salute the Soldier campaign, enough to equip an entire brigade of the 50th Northumbrian Division. Locals were encouraged to donate money by an extensive poster campaign.[762] In 1944, Merchant Navy week events in Newcastle raised a total

[762] See illustrations, overleaf.

of £591.16s.9d (over £23,000 today) from a variety of events ranging from concerts and dances, to a very popular rabbit show and a sheepdog trial.[763]

[763] TWAS: MD/NC/94/18. Holidays at Home Special Committee minutes, June 30th 1944.

The lads from our street

The men who fought at Narvik,
at Bruneval and Crete,
They were youngsters from our village,
and lads from down our street;
The men who followed Monty,
the deathless desert rats
Once played round here—with sticks
for stumps and lumps of wood for bats;

A day will come when bells will ring
and flags will be unfurled
To cheer the British Tommies
who helped to save the world;
Great men will tell how once they
snatched high victory from defeat,
But to us they'll always be the lads
who went from down our street.

Figure 21. Salute the Soldier Week poster.[764]

[764] TWAS: T15/1516. Poster issued by the National Savings Committee.

Figure 22. Salute the Soldier Week campaign poster issued by Tynemouth Savings Committee. This one highlights the evacuation of Dunkirk.[765]

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[765] TWAS: T15/1517. One of a series of posters issued by Tynemouth Savings Committee, 1944.

HE TURNED THE TABLES AT EL ALAMEIN!

EGYPT stood open to the invader! The future of the war hung in the balance. Our troops had been forced back, back, back. Rommel gloated, poised to strike. Cairo was his. Cairo, and all that glittering prize that was Egypt. Once more the British Soldier had his back to the wall, grim, determined, forced back, but not beaten, ready to do or die. He did it! El Alamein will be inscribed with Waterloo on the colours of many a famous regiment. The biggest barrage in history, the cleverest strategy, the toughest fighters. Rommel ran! Egypt was saved. Libya was ours once more!

SALUTE THE SOLDIER! The victor of El Alamein! Back him up with guns and ammunition. Equip him well. Feed him well. See him through!

YOU OWE IT TO HIM! Salute him with your Savings. Invest in 3% Savings or Defence Bonds, 2½ War Bonds, Savings Certificates, Stamps, at the Post Office or Trustee Savings Bank. The work helps HIM! The savings help YOU!

Figure 23. Salute the Soldier Week campaign poster issued by Tynemouth Savings Committee. This one highlighting the victory at El Alamein.[766]

[766] *Ibid.*

Schemes aiming to provide entertainment came to be collectively known as 'Holidays at Home'. They were actually the result of a joint requirement to limit unnecessary civilian travel and to "improve 'morale', by providing healthy relaxation for factory workers."[767] The first Holidays at Home period had been introduced in 1941 during which, "Newcastle upon Tyne had organized an apparently successful Games Week."[768] Indeed, the local authorities of the North East of England in general seem to have been keen supporters of the initiative. They organised a number of schemes from the outset despite a lack of interest demonstrated by central government. One intelligence report demonstrated the lack of faith in the scheme when it stated that "Holidays at Home have developed into a broad farce".[769] Despite the obvious benefits of these events it would seem that central government was slow in recognising the boost provided to local morale and the regional importance of the Holidays at Home schemes to the people of Tyneside. Funding for events was often needed and the 1944 events were hit by a refusal by the Ministry of Supply to allow the printing of a 24 page programme of events on the grounds that paper was scarce. The Ministry did offer to consider printing two twelve-page programmes however: one for the first four weeks and one for the second. The local authority committee eventually decided to simply produce a more limited twelve-page brochure for the whole period.[770]

Newcastle Corporation appears to have made a significantly greater effort in establishing the scheme than most other authorities in Britain. The events organised in the city tended to be of a larger scale than most comparable measures in other

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[767] Sladen, C, 'Holidays at Home in the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 1 (2002), p 69.
[768] *Ibid*, p 71.
[769] *Ibid*, p 72.
[770] TWAS: MD/NC/94/18. Minutes of the Holidays at Home Executive Committee, chaired by Councillor Waller, May 12th 1944.

localities.[771] In 1944 the main Holiday at Home period was spread over eight weeks with events ranging from displays by the ARP services, armed forces, singing competitions, dances, games, displays of models, produce, and livestock shows.[772] By the late years of the war these activities had become an important part of life on Tyneside for many. By 1944 the events were so popular that the Newcastle poultry show included 30 classes of entrant. The policy of rationing and the encouragement to 'Dig for Victory' had resulted in many of the people of Tyneside growing their own vegetables. Others went further and reared their own livestock as an additional source of wartime meat. Animals, most often pigs, were reared in back yards, allotments and on any remaining waste ground, with neighbours or work colleagues forming pig clubs. Not only was this useful in solving wartime shortages but the forming of clubs centred on these activities strengthened the sense of community purpose and togetherness.

Figure 23. Heaton Pig Club members.[773]

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[771] For a comparison see Wheeler, H, *Huddersfield at War* (Bath: Alan Sutton, 1992), p 136.
[772] TWAS: MD/NC/94/18. Holidays at Home Executive Committee (Chaired by Councillor Waller) minutes, May 12th 1944.
[773] Photograph © City of Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle Libraries & Arts, Leisure Services Department.

Other activities were organised to foster and develop the strength of the local community and to reinforce togetherness with foreign allies. These included sporting competitions involving foreign servicemen who were based in the area. In the case of Newcastle upon Tyne these events often took the form of baseball matches involving American servicemen,[774] many of whom were based in nearby Heaton and Byker.[775] The participation of American servicemen in the *Holidays at Home* schemes would appear to have been relatively commonplace.[776] This is contrary to an assertion that leisure pursuits were a part of a defence of national identity against not only "Nazi tyranny but also (and increasingly as the war continued) against Americanism."[777] The servicemen of nearby Polish RAF, who were often billeted in Byker,[778] squadrons also took part, playing in friendly football 'international' matches against English and Scottish service teams.

The role of continuing education, as provided by the Workers Educational Association, also benefited from the *Holidays at Home* activities. Several of the scheduled events, such as the Brain's Trust that was organised by Canon Pelly on behalf of the Council of United Christian Action, were intended to stimulate their audiences and to encourage educational pursuits.[779] Many of these academic activities were actively encouraged, at both a local and national level, by the Ministry of Labour.

The operation of the events that made up the annual *Holidays at Home* period required considerable funding and a high degree of organisation. The granting of late

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[774] TWAS: MD/NC/94/18. Holidays at Home Executive Committee minutes, May 12th 1944.
[775] Correspondence from Mr R Miley, 2001.
[776] Sladen, C, 'Holidays at Home', p 78.
[777] Hill, J, "'When Work Is Over': Labour, Leisure and Culture in Wartime Britain', in Hayes, N and Hill, J (eds), *'Millions Like Us?' British Culture in the Second World War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p 259.
[778] Correspondence from Mr R Miley, 2001.
[779] TWAS: MD/NC/94/18. Holidays at Home Special Committee minutes, May 19th 1944.

licences, organising sufficient public transport, booking dance bands, the erection of a fairground covering twenty acres of the Town Moor, renting of marquees, these were just some of the necessary measures. It can be seen that this required a considerable effort on the part of the local authority whilst it also involved the local community in a way designed to strengthen morale and foster community spirit.

A large proportion of the staff necessary to operate stalls and to provide stewarding were local volunteers. They came from either the civil defence services or were civilians and council workers who volunteered their time regardless of working commitments. Although many took part from a sense of civic duty, they were paid the sum of 1s.9d per hour for their services. There is evidence to suggest that the civil defence workers were sometimes unwilling to take up such duties if they would interfere with their official tasks.[780] This occasional lack of communal spirit affected not only civil defence workers but also dignitaries. For example, the Duchess of Northumberland who, having previously agreed to open the *Holidays at Home* period and the Merchant Navy week, withdrew from her commitment just days before the event was to commence.[781]

Whilst Newcastle could afford a relatively expansive *Holidays at Home* scheme other local authorities on Tyneside went for a more low key approach. The 1943 Holidays at Home month organised by Tynemouth Borough Council emphasised musical amusements. Open air dances, variety concerts, band performances, and an amusement fair were the big attractions although there were also some small sporting competitions.[782]

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[780] *Ibid.*
[781] *Ibid*, June 2nd 1944.
[782] Christenson, N, *The People's History. North Shields. Plodgin' through the Clarts* (Seaham: The People's History, 1999), p 84.

The activities co-ordinated by the local authorities experienced competition and enjoyed assistance from individually organised events under the banner of organisations, such as the Miners' Welfare Commission. This organisation in particular had garnered experience in organising such activities and could make an often significant contribution.[783] This reflected the level of necessity that recreational events had in the attitudes of the general population and the spirit of co-operation that existed in some of the area's most tightly knit communities.[784]

Holidays at Home experienced a positive reaction from the people of Tyneside and many relate how they looked forward to the activities as a welcome break from the austerity and growing drudgery of the later war years. The reaction of the residents of Tyneside to these events can thus be explained as a want to escape from the war weariness that became prevalent in the middle and latter years of the conflict. As evidenced by the fact that catering profits during the Holidays at Home period rose by 24% from 1943 to 1944.[785] The popularity of the events was obviously increasing, people were more enthusiastic, and willing to give backing to forms of relaxation. This was reflected in the summing up by the local council which stated that "due to the success of the year's endeavours the Council should attempt to fund and organise a similar series of events during the coming year."[786] The general success of the scheme led to some calls for it to be extended into peacetime as well. Notes of caution, however, were sounded by several major unions and by the Ministry of Health. These claimed that despite the popularity of *Holidays at Home* it should on no account have been assumed that the events were a direct, or appropriate, substitute for peacetime holidays. Of course this assessment failed to take into account the fact

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[783] Sladen, C, 'Holidays at Home', p 88.
[784] For a fuller debate on this see Griffin, C, 'Not Just a Case of Baths, Canteens and Rehabilitation Centres' in, Hayes, N& Hill, J, *'Million's Like Us?'*, pp 261-295.
[785] TWAS: MD/NC/94/18. Holidays at Home Special Committee, minutes, October 6th 1944.
[786] *Ibid*, December 22nd 1944.

that for many working-class residents of Tyneside they had never experienced a peacetime holiday, being unable to afford the cost and not having the necessary transportation, and it was this group that received the greatest benefit from the wartime scheme.

Aside from official schemes the people of Tyneside proved that they were quite capable of arranging their own entertainment. Although denied the ever-popular football matches due to wartime restrictions on crowds they still enjoyed attending local cinemas and public houses. Cinemas remained a popular form of entertainment on Tyneside throughout the war and, as well as providing relaxation, were, along with the radio, the main source of news delivery to the masses. Amongst the fans of Tyneside cinema was the Austrian philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who was based at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle carrying out studies into traumatic injury, and was resident in the city from 1943 to 1944.[787]

Attendances at public houses remained high on Tyneside despite the restrictions of short supplies of beer, earlier closing times, and problems of public transport. The trend did exhibit seasonal patterns with the numbers declining during the winter months, especially early in the war. With wartime wages and adequate employment levels a large number of people found that they had more money to spend and, with the rationing system and the shortages of luxury goods, less to spend it on. This applied especially to young adults who, before the war, had seldom had significant amounts of spending money available to them. It was this age group that showed the most marked shift in behaviour with large numbers of them frequenting dance halls and public houses.[788] Despite the shortages and austerity of wartime

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[787] Kilnen, L, 'Wittgenstein in Newcastle', *Northern Review*, 13 (2003-2004), p 25.
[788] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, November 7th 1941.

Tyneside it appears that the vast majority attempted to maintain as normal a life as possible.

Pulling Together?

One of the greatest perceived threats to the stability of the nation at the outbreak of war was the existence of thousands of foreign national who resided in Britain. German and Austrian citizens who were perceived to be Nazi sympathisers were immediately interned in a converted holiday camp at the outbreak of war. By October 1939 the remainder were appearing before hastily organised tribunal boards and were classified in three groups according to their perceived threat level. Those deemed a threat were classified 'A' and were immediately interned. A person judged to be classification 'B' fell into the middle ground and whilst they were not immediately interned their movements were harshly restricted and the threat of immediate internment hung over them. Those graded 'C' were judged to be no threat and they were allowed complete freedom,[789] although they were later forced to re-locate from important coastal areas, including much of Tyneside. In fact the initial internment was very small: only 600 enemy aliens were interned whilst 64,200 were classified in band 'C', some 87% of the total number who went before the tribunals.

The fall of Norway, the reported extensive use of a Fifth Column, and the establishment of the Quisling government, caused widespread alarm and despondency amongst all sections of British society and boosted the campaign of those who wished

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[789] Mackay, R, *The Test of War. Inside Britain 1939-45* (London: University College London, 1999), pp 96-97

to see greater internment of foreign nationals. This campaign had been started by the national press, supported by the armed forces and some in government. One of the foremost media campaigners for complete internment was the *Daily Mail*, which had supported appeasement (admittedly along with many other members of the press, general public, and government), and Mosley's Black Shirts, before the war. Over the four month period from April to July 1940 the paper, backed by others such as the *Sunday Chronicle* ran numerous articles that berated the lax official attitude towards the threat of an alien Fifth Column, urged the internment of all aliens, and insinuated that many European refugees were in fact agents on the payroll of the Nazis.[790] This view was balanced by the more sympathetic coverage given by several other national newspapers. *The Times*, for example, was inundated with readers' letters criticising the policy of internment, many of them opposing an editorial which claimed that it was wise not to take any chances with aliens.[791] Letters had, however, appeared as early as April 1940 criticising the calls for mass internment as a tactic of fascism.[792] Others criticised the restrictions placed on those aliens whom had been recognised by tribunals as representing no threat to the national security.[793] The vast majority of letters that were sent to *The Times* on the subject agreed that some internment was necessary. But, that there were many cases of aliens friendly to Britain, and with important skills, being prevented from contributing to the war effort. The editor referred to these people as "useful aliens", presumably there were also anglophile aliens who lacking skills would have been termed useless?[794] It would appear that aliens were still not being thought of as human beings but were only of use to the nation if they were skilled.

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[790] See Lafitte, F, *The Internment of Aliens* (London: Libris, 1988), pp 169-173.
[791] *The Times*, May 13th 1940, p 7.
[792] *Ibid*, April 27th 1940, p 4.
[793] *Ibid*, June 15th 1940, p 4.
[794] *Ibid*, July 11th 1940, p 5.

Despite claims that the "impetus for the round up came not from the public but from the Army, a handful of MPs and the press",[795] it would appear that on Tyneside the negative media campaign found some considerable favour and had influenced large numbers of people, enjoying widespread support on Tyneside, with a police report before the collapse of Norway stating that, "There was widespread support for greater degrees of internment and restrictions placed on enemy aliens."[796] Indeed, it was noted by Mass Observation that the internment policies intended for enemy aliens were widely welcomed due to the increase of the general publics "latent antagonism to the alien and foreigner".[797] It has been argued that the entire policy of internment was itself a product of the enduring enmity towards exhibited aliens by the majority of the country and that this hostility was exacerbated by the wartime situation.[798]

Mounting pressure over the issue of enemy aliens resulted in the government capitulating on May 12th. When the Minister of Home Security, Sir John Anderson, ordered the immediate internment of all enemy aliens living in coastal areas: the warning order was actually sent out to police forces on May 11th, under the orders of the Secretary of State. Later that week, all class 'B' aliens were interned. The initial order states clearly that the internment was to be temporary and that consideration should be shown to the persons concerned. This is reinforced throughout the official warning which even states, "It must be remembered that the majority are well disposed to this country and their temporary internment is merely a precautionary measure".[799] This would appear to show that the authorities were reluctantly ordering

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[795] MacKay, R, *Half the Battle. Civilian morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p 64.
[796] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Conditions in Newcastle upon Tyne – Special Reports of the Chief Constable of City Police, April 25th 1940.
[797] Rose, S O, *Which People's War*, p 94.
[798] See: Holmes, C, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp 191-193.
[799] TWAS: PA/NC/5/24. Newcastle City Police Files re: aliens. Post Office Telegram to Chief Constables on behalf of the Secretary of State, May 11th 1940.

this measure and that they viewed it as purely temporary. The rapidity of events that followed, culminating with the entry of Italy into the war, led to an almost nationwide panic and the abandonment of what had been an attempt at an understanding policy towards aliens. This was replaced by the internment of nearly all enemy aliens, including those classified as being no threat and in many cases refugees and opponents of the Axis leaderships.

One of the results of this policy was that individual industrial concerns could be deprived of several of their key workers; a situation that had a major impact on the Team Valley Industrial Estate in Gateshead.[800] Some aliens were arrested and interned before the May announcement. At Reyrolles factory a specialist engineer, Mr Alfred Gunther Nathorff, working on a new type of airbrake switching gear, was interned. It was claimed that this had caused the company "a great deal of inconvenience".[801] Major Brock of the Intelligence Service replied that, despite the protestations that Mr Nathorff had no means of obtaining sensitive information, he presumed Reyrolles' management were "not surprised at what has happened."[802]

Those scheduled for internment on Sunday, May 12th, were rounded up at 8 am, in a highly organised operation, by local police officers. They were escorted to the nearest infantry unit to be handed over to military control and then transferred to one of the training centres that were acting as collection and processing stations.[803] They were allowed no communication with members of their family. In Newcastle there were a total of 52 persons taken into custody and handed over to the

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[800] Lafitte, F, *The Internment of Aliens*, pp 151-152.
[801] TWAS: DS/REY/35. Reyrolles correspondence, letter from Mr Towns to Major Brock, January 10th 1940.
[802] *Ibid*, letter from Major Brock to Mr Towns, January 21st 1940.
[803] TWAS: PA/NC/5/24. Newcastle City Police Files re: aliens. City Police telephone report form detailing Home Office instructions for dealing with enemy aliens, May 12th 1940.

commanding officer of Fenham Barracks.[804] Four more men were arrested the next day and handed over to the same destination.[805]

Despite the increasing harshness of the treatment of enemy aliens and the worsening attitudes towards them both on Tyneside and nationally there were still efforts to ensure that other aliens were cared for and received good treatment. The Civil Defence Northern regional office attempted to put in place an educational programme for merchant seamen and refugees. The plans showed a considerable degree of co-ordination, as the appointment of Professor T.S. Simey, from the University of Liverpool, Department of Social Science, to the position of regional officer, would appear to confirm.[806]

Tyneside had a considerable number of ethnic or national minorities as is common to those areas that are reliant on sea trade. Many of these aliens had lived in the Tyneside area for years and were a naturalised and valued part of the community. The area and its population had previously shown sympathy for, and an understanding of, minorities, even going so far as to welcome Basque refugees during the Spanish Civil War.[807] The impact of the war on this portion of the Tyneside community meant a loss of their civil rights and substantial amounts of their freedom. As part of the preparations for the coming war all aliens, not only those judged as enemy aliens, were required to register with their local police force and had restrictions placed upon their movements and their rights to own items such as radios, motor vehicles and maps. Several of the alien communities of the North East were unhappy at the treatment afforded them by the dictates of the alien order. Those who were officially

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[804] Letter from F J Crawley, Chief Constable, to the Under Secretary of State, May 12th 1940, in *ibid.*
[805] Letters from Chief Constable Crawley to Officer Commanding Fenham Barracks, May 13th 1940, in *ibid.*
[806] Letter from Inspector of Constabulary to Chief Constable Crawley requesting information, November 29th 1940, in *ibid.*
[807] Watson, D, & Corcoran, J, *An Inspiring Example. The North East of England and the Spanish Civil War1936-1939* (Unknown: McGuffin Press, 1996), pp 73-84.

residents of British protectorates from around the world found themselves classified as aliens and were bound by curfews and other restrictions. In South Shields, the members of the British Somalian community, already struggling to find sufficient work due to the requirements of registration and the strictures of the 1935 British Shipping (Assistance) Act,[808] particularly resented being treated as aliens and found that such treatment made it more difficult for them to secure work. This resentment culminated in an angry letter being sent by Mr Y H Sulliman, on behalf of the Somalis, to the Home Office on May 15th 1940.[809] The Home Office proved to be receptive to this complaint and sent out instructions to local Chief Constables that they were to be allowed considerable lee-way when classifying British Somalis as aliens and that the enforcement of the restrictions on this group should be relaxed wherever possible.[810]

The task of registering and monitoring all aliens was one to which considerable police resources were dedicated, especially after the fall of Norway and the Low Countries and the tales of the effectiveness of the Nazis' use of Fifth Columnists. In Newcastle upon Tyne alone there were 1025 aliens resident within the city boundaries.[811] Of this total there were representatives of 29 separate nationalities and one person stated to be "stateless".[812] These are the numbers only for those within Newcastle upon Tyne and there were significant numbers living in other parts of Tyneside: notably the large population of Arab nationals that were an established part of the community in South Shields, despite the antipathy that was often

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[808] Lawless, R I, *From Ta'Izz to Tyneside. An Arab Community in the North-East of England During the Early Twentieth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), p 167.
[809] NA: CO 535/135. Letter from Mr Sulliman, on behalf of British Somalis on Tyneside, to the Home Office, May 15th 1940.
[810] *Ibid*, Home Office internal memo, May 25th 1940.
[811] TWAS: PA/NC/5/24. Newcastle City Police Files re: aliens. List of aliens resident in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1940.
[812] *Ibid*. See Appendix C, Table i.

demonstrated towards them.[813] In addition there was also a significant Scandinavian population of fishermen in and around North Shields.

Aliens were categorised in three groups: 'old residents' were those who had lived in the city prior to the war. 'Conditional landings' were those who had made their way to Tyneside after war had commenced and largely consisted of refugees but could also include students who had been granted government endorsements allowing them to enter the country. The final group consisted of the 'alien seamen' who were naturally common to the area due to Newcastle's importance as a port.[814]

The largest proportion of aliens in the city at this time consisted of 457 foreign seamen. This group was largely composed of Scandinavians and Russians as Newcastle had been designated as the pool city for these men; all seamen of these nationalities were to remain in Newcastle upon Tyne whilst ashore and could leave only for the purpose of a job at sea.[815] The general attitude of the populace of Tyneside towards the Scandinavian seamen appears to have been one of warm solidarity and understanding with the men being seen as "valuable citizens" and efforts being made to ensure that they were "embraced in our fold".[816] A committee chaired by Lord Eustace Percy and including the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, as well as Mr Dalgliesh, was created to arrange facilities for these men including the establishment of a meeting place with provision for newspapers and refreshments; a

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[813] For a detailed history of the South Shields Arab community see, Lawless, R I, *From Ta'izz to Tyneside. An Arab Community in the North-East of England during the Early Twentieth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1995).
[814] TWAS: PA/NC/5/24. Newcastle City Police Files re: aliens. Letter from Deputy Chief Constable Bell of Newcastle City Police to the Civil Defence Northern Regional office, December 2nd 1940.
[815] See Appendix B, Table iv.
[816] TWAS: PA/NC/5/24. Newcastle City Police Files re: aliens. Letter from Mr R S Dalgliesh JP (Of Dalgliesh Coal Exporters, Ship Owners and Brokers) regarding attitudes towards Scandinavian seamen, October 18th 1940.

civic welcome for those who arrived in the area and the supervision of lodgings to ensure that the seamen did not associate with less salubrious elements.[817]

The people of Tyneside appear to have reacted with kindness and tolerance towards the foreign military personnel that they came into close contact with. For the first few years of the war these largely consisted of Polish, Canadian and Australian airmen and soldiers. The interaction was not marred by any major incidents and the relationship between the locals and these interlopers was consistently described as excellent.[818] When numbers of American troops began arriving in the area there were several minor incidents but nothing to disrupt the status quo. The area did not have as many American visitors as other areas of the country, although there were, a large number billeted in Byker and Heaton; however, there were no "coloured troops in this locality".[819] British reactions towards racial differences, not only Black Americans but also colonial troops, can best be described as ambivalent. Although many were strongly opposed to any form of official segregation that the American forces attempted to impose, others were suspicious of Black Americans and colonial troops.[820] Relations with the Americans on Tyneside were rapidly established and they became active participants in the social and recreational activities of the area.

The activities of various political and religious organisations also caused some concern to both local and central government. Amongst these organisations were the British Communist Party, the British Union of Fascist, the Peace Pledge Union and other, less widely recognised, groups such as the Quakers and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Very tight restrictions were placed on many of these groups and on Tyneside known members were closely observed by the local police forces. The

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[817] *Ibid*, Letter to Alderman Dalgliesh from Lord Eustace Percy, October 11th 1940.
[818] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1941-1945.
[819] *Ibid*, March 25th 1944.
[820] For a fuller analysis of the issues of race and the Home Front see: Rose, S O, *Which People's War?*, pp 239-284.

distrust reached such levels that when the BCP set up an advice centre in Newcastle, in the aftermath of a particularly heavy raid, the local police assigned units to maintain surveillance on the building.[821]

The activities of both the PPU and the Jehovah's Witnesses were met with both concern and stern disciplinary measures. Both of these organisations continued throughout the war to advocate conscientious objection, not only to active military service but also to undertaking roles in the ARP Services. It would appear that the authorities on Tyneside were particularly harsh when it came to dealing with conscientious objectors. Newcastle magistrates turned down every exemption from service appeal made by members of either organisation, it was claimed. During at least one hearing a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses was said to have been refused exemption from military service and held up to ridicule for his stance.[822]

Despite initial reports of "infinitesimal" amounts of subversive and pacifist activities in the area, the anti-war campaign championed by the Jehovah's Witnesses (largely consisting of the distribution of pacifist leaflets encouraging people to object to wartime service),[823] was an ongoing source of comment in local police intelligence reports.[824] This suggests that the anti-war feeling, whilst limited in nature, was greater than infinitesimal. By the early winter of 1940, there were concerns that pacifist activity in the area was expanding and this continued into the next year as many pacifists refused to attend medical examinations.[825] Throughout 1941 and 1942 the authorities continued to take a hard line against conscientious objection from Jehovah's Witnesses. On at least seven separate occasions numbers of people belonging to the organisation were either fined substantial sums or, more commonly,

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[821] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1941-1945, September 12th 1941.
[822] *The Times*, February 23rd 1940, p 3.
[823] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, March 29th 1941.
[824] *Ibid*, October 17th 1939.
[825] *Ibid*, October 25th 1940.

imprisoned.[826] The members of this organisation would appear to have been undaunted by the disciplinary measures taken against them as they were able to hold a conference in the summer of 1942 that attracted some 500 outside visitors.[827]

Ideological movements such as the Peace Pledge Union,[828] claiming that it had seen war and would not tolerate it again, had proven to be immensely popular in the years after the ending of the First World War. A spirit of pacifism had overtaken a large number of the British populace – culminating in the 1930s vote by the Oxford Union that they would refuse to fight for King and Country in any future war, and by the way in which the Munich 'peace' agreement was welcomed by the majority of the British public.

Whilst this was an important social movement it had begun to show signs of fading by the mid-1930s and was to dissolve altogether under the impact of the threat of Nazism. The pacifist organisations did enjoy some support on Tyneside, but with a large proportion of the population depending for their livelihoods on the manufacture of weaponry and ammunitions it is perhaps explainable that support was probably on a lesser scale than in other parts of the country. Despite this, the PPU did actively campaign on Tyneside during the war but its campaigns never gained much publicity or garnered public support; the reaction of the local populace being repeatedly described as "negative".[829] Indeed there appears to have been a large consensus favouring the banning of pacifist organisation meetings for the duration of the war.[830]

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[826] *Ibid*, October 10th 1941-December 5th 1942.
[827] *Ibid*, September 11th 1942.
[828] One of the founders of the PPU was the First World War padre, Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy (known as Woodbine Willie). For accounts of this remarkable man, see Purcell, W, *Woodbine Willie: Study of Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1983), also Grundy, M, *A Fiery Glow in the Darkness: Woodbine Willie – Padre and Poet* (London: Osborne, 1997).
[829] *Ibid*, October 27th 1939.
[830] *Ibid*, May 9th 1940.

The PPU continued, along with its allies in the Jehovah's Witnesses, in some small way by chalking peace slogans onto walls; several of these slogans seem to have been intended to stir up class feelings including one which read "England – the land of the freemason".[831] The party was also attempting to hold meetings but these failed to capture any public support and the organisation struggled to make any headway on Tyneside; by 1941 the local police were commenting on PPU meetings as being "very poorly attended".[832] After this initial failure the local PPU restricted itself to more targeted activities such as running campaigns to free conscientious objectors, such as John Morley,[833] who had been imprisoned under the Defence Regulations, and complaining about the treatment of conscientious objectors in general, despite overwhelming public opinion.[834] This was to be the mainstay of the party's Tyneside activities for the remainder of the war. Several of its members were themselves imprisoned for breaches of the defence Regulations pertaining to military or ARP service, along with the aforementioned Jehovah's Witnesses who were not recognised as having any legitimate reason for refusing to serve.[835]

The PPU continued to misjudge the mood of the Tyneside public and when a meeting was held on the Quayside in Newcastle objections to several speakers became so strenuous that the police intervened to close down the meeting. This was the only time such a gathering was closed down due to unrest on Tyneside during the war.[836] The political misjudgement of the party continued with its last noticeable wartime act on Tyneside when several of its leading local members stood surety for

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[831] *Ibid*, March 29th 1941.
[832] *Ibid*, March 14th 1941.
[833] Morley was imprisoned for non-payment of a fine after being prosecuted under the Defence Regulations (Fire Watching) Act. He had been a conscientious objector in World War I.
[834] For a detailed discussion on attitudes towards conscientious objectors in World War II see Rose, S O, *Which People's War*, pp 170-178.
[835] For a more detailed discussion of this see Rose, S O, *Which People's War*, pp 171-172.
[836] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, December 3rd 1943.

the Trotskyites charged with organising the unpopular shipyard apprentice's strike of 1944.[837]

Perhaps the foremost political organisation to fall under suspicion was the British Communist Party.[838] This was a particular concern to the authorities on Tyneside as the BCP had proven to have some limited influence, especially amongst the local shipyard workers and mining communities. Although far more shipyard workers continued to vote Conservative the BCP had infiltrated the shop stewards movement and had a toe-hold in several unions. This continued throughout the war as the party continued, despite making increased production a priority, to champion the rights of the workers by calling for compensation for workers whose labours were disrupted by raids and alerts and by setting up advice centres after heavy raids.[839] Support increased greatly after the change of party policy brought about by the invasion of the USSR. Up until this point the BCP's anti-war stance had found little favour on Tyneside. The propensity for the party to hold lunchtime meetings outside the major industrial employers caused some concern to the authorities as it was thought that these could encourage militancy amongst the workforce but this was a fundamental misunderstanding of the ambivalence in which the BCP viewed the war and its effect on the workers. Because of the imperilment of Russia the party became obsessed with the need for increasing production and urged dedication towards the war effort. Indeed the party even went as far as strike breaking during the latter years of the war when industrial militancy became more commonplace.[840] The assertions of A.J.P. Taylor that the BCP was wholeheartedly committed to the war effort, and that

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[837] *Ibid*, April 21st 1944.
[838] For a detailed study of government attitudes towards British Communists in the inter-war years see, Ewing, K D, and Gearty, C A, *The Struggle for Civil Liberties. Political Freedom and the Rule of Law in Britain, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp 94-154.
[839] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, September 12th 1941.
[840] *Ibid*, October 9th 1942 – November 7th 1942.

when the 'Daily Worker' was banned there was no protest would seem to be reinforced by the evidence of Tyneside.[841] Only the local party campaigned, albeit vociferously, for the re-instatement of the newspaper.[842] At the same time the party was continuing to rally support for workers' issues and attempting to gain control of the Shop Stewards Movement. This ambivalent attitude was to ensure that whilst the party accomplished much on Tyneside; enabling a substantial rise in membership, it was never trusted by the authorities and as a result close attention was paid to its activities.

Early in the war the existence of the Nazi-Soviet pact had led many in authority to call for the arrest and internment of members and the banning of the party as a whole. One of the few British citizens to be executed for treachery during the war was a member of the BCP.[843] Despite these calls the popularity of the party in championing the causes of the working class on Tyneside ensured that there were no such calls from this region, despite the fact that the local police would probably have backed this policy. This was reinforced in the police reports from early in the war and there was a period during the height of the invasion scare when a large minority thought that B.C.P. meetings should be banned. It is however doubtful that there was ever such a clear consensus on this matter as some within the police force suggested.[844]

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[841] Taylor, A J P, *English History 1914-1945*, p 503.
[842] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, February 1st 1941.
[843] This was George John Armstrong, who was arrested whilst attempting to pass secrets to the German consul in Boston (USA). He was later tried and hanged for treason. Armstrong was a crewman aboard a merchant ship and a member of the B.C.P. who had been encouraged in his activities by the party only to be later abandoned after the German invasion of Russia just 17 days before his execution. For a fuller account of this case see Thomas, D, *An Underworld at War. Spivs, Deserters, Racketeers and Civilians in the Second World War* (London: John Murray, 2003), p 328. Also, PRO: CRIM 1/1300. Court session, April 22nd 1941, and PRO: HO 144/21558. Papers relating to the conviction and sentencing of G J Armstrong, 1941.
[844] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, May 9th 1940.

After the German invasion of Russia there was widespread support for both the Russian people and the BCP, as Russia suddenly became an ally. This could be seen on Tyneside by the party's generally high levels of activity. Many working-class Tyneside residents felt a closer affinity with the Russian people than they did with the country's American allies. The BCP focussed primarily on the issues that captured popular imagination and exploited concerns over the management of the war. These campaigns became more effective as the war progressed and it is impossible to overestimate the importance that sympathy for the Russian people played in this increase in popularity.

Whilst its initial meetings were poorly attended,[845] the party attracted followers by manipulating common concerns such as the demand for more effective deep air raid shelters,[846] and by the sympathy engendered by the suffering of the Russian people and by November 1940 the party was holding large meetings and raising substantial amounts of money through collections.[847] Two of these meetings within the space of 2 months were attended by 1,300 people and raised the total sum of £125. The importance of the local area to the party was reflected in the importance of the speakers who addressed these meetings; a gathering in January 1941 was addressed by Harry Pollitt.[848] Later meetings attracted ever larger crowds including several of over 1,000 persons. These large attendances were often because of the appearance of well known speakers or were combined with the activities of the various Anglo-Soviet Committees that were organised by the BCP.[849] The creation of subsidiary organisations was a common party strategy. These subordinate groups were usually designed to appeal to popular sentiment of the time. So, after the

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[845] *Ibid*, October 27th 1939 – April 25th 1940.
[846] *Ibid*, September 27th 1940.
[847] *Ibid*, November 23rd 1940 and January 4th 1941.
[848] *Ibid*, January 4th 1941.
[849] *Ibid*, October 10th 1941.

invasion of Russia, the Anglo-Soviet Committees were created and proved very popular. Most worryingly for the authorities this was especially the case with "people of a better type",[850] whilst in order to exploit the food shortages of 1941 the party organised the Newcastle Housewives Guild.[851]

Despite the increasing success of the party's activities there is considerable evidence of a mellowing of official attitudes towards the party. When Willie Gallagher, M.P. addressed a large meeting at Newcastle City Hall his speech was described by an undercover police observer as being "moderate and [it] stressed the necessity for unity between peoples of this country and the USSR."[852] This softening of attitudes can perhaps be partially explained by the fact that the key demands of the party largely squared with official government policy; at the time the BCP was demanding greater industrial production, the opening of a second front and an increase in the amount of aid being given to Russia.[853]

Other political organisations, such as the BUF (rebuffed on Tyneside during the 1930s), were less active on Tyneside.[854] It is difficult to analyse levels of support for the BUF as most supporters would not admit to their allegiance during the war. The organisation had tried to make Tyneside a key stronghold in the 1930's but had faced a great deal of, often violent, opposition and had failed to make considerable progress.[855] Tyneside had long enjoyed a reputation for racial tolerance. Orthodox Jews had a seminary located in Gateshead because of the area's reputation for open-mindedness.[856] Indeed, the Gateshead seminary was a nationally important centre for

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[850] *Ibid*, November 7th 1941.
[851] *Ibid*, March 14th 1941.
[852] *Ibid*, July 18th 1941.
[853] *Ibid*, 7th November 1941. Also, see Pelling, H, *Britain and the Second World War*, p 250.
[854] Again, for a detailed view of concerns surrounding the BUF see Ewing, K D, and Gearty, C A, *The Struggle for Civil Liberties*, pp 275-330.
[855] For a detailed consideration of the BUF and anti-fascist activities on Tyneside, see Todd, N, *In Excited Times: People against the Blackshirts* (Whitley Bay: Bewick Press, 1994).
[856] See: Copsey, N, *Anti-Fascism in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).

the study of the Torah.[857] Newcastle, and Tyneside in general, had a reputation spanning a century or more of accepting exiles. This can be partially ascribed to the "City's long liberal tradition."[858] This was to continue to be the case throughout the war. The hostility of the majority of the Tyneside population towards the Fascists increased markedly after the declaration of war and demands for all members of this group to be interned were commonplace. Early attempts by the organisation to hold meetings suffered from very poor attendances and plans for later meetings were very quickly abandoned.[859] The antipathy with which this political party was still faced with on Tyneside was seen by the reaction to the release of Mosley from internment in 1943. The North East branch of the Communist Party very quickly, and unsurprisingly, released a broadsheet which demanded that the leader of the BUF be re-arrested and kept in custody for the duration of the war.[860] As part of this campaign petitions were circulated in the major industrial works of Tyneside and the sentiment proved to be popular amongst the workforces. However, once the release had been discussed and explained in the Houses of Parliament public anger quickly subsided on Tyneside.[861]

In recent years some historians have attempted to demonstrate that the existence of a blitz spirit was a myth through descriptions of crimes that occurred during the war.[862] They argue that the existence of these crimes must mean that the population of Britain was not in fact 'pulling together' and was rather looking after its own needs first and foremost; often at the expense of the overall war effort. However,

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[857] For further discussion of the North-East's Jewish community see: Olsover, L, *Jewish Communities of North-East England 1755-1980* (Gateshead: Ashley Mark, 1980).
[858] Todd, N, 'Ambition and Harsh Reality', in Ayris, I, *et al, Water under the Bridges*, pp 93-94.
[859] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, May 9th 1940.
[860] Broadsheet, 'The People against Mosley', December 1943, in *ibid.*
[861] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, December 3rd 1943.
[862] For example see Hylton, S, *Their Darkest Hour. The Hidden History of the Home Front 1939-1945* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), pp 186-202 or Thomas ,D, *An Underworld at War. Spivs, Deserters, Racketeers and Civilians in the Second World War* (London: John Murray, 2003).

it would appear from the evidence of the police report files, and from the monthly intelligence reports,[863] that crime, apart from black market activities which are impossible to gauge, did not play a significant role on wartime Tyneside. Despite the increasing number of offences for which otherwise law abiding citizens could see their actions criminalised, the rate of crime in the area remained steady. Unfortunately, the nature of wartime crime makes the subject a difficult one to evaluate. Offences that went undiscovered obviously very rarely come to light and do not, of course, appear in any official documents whilst there is also the possibility that the police, eager to foster the sense of togetherness and community spirit, failed to report less serious infractions. This would appear to have been especially common in the rural areas.[864] Combined with the loss of good young officers and their replacement with older and/or less experienced volunteers these factors ensured that laxity could hide a multitude of sins.

There were two distinct varieties of crime during the period. The first was that which had taken place during peacetime, principally perpetrated by career criminals, and was to continue throughout the conflict. The other type was that which was specifically related to the wartime situation and included black market activities, breaches of lighting regulations, profiteering, and acting contrary to the new regulations that were brought in relating to security. Many of these crimes were carried out by otherwise law abiding citizens and some became accepted by Tyneside society. One incident of this type, although there could be a more serious explanation, involved two South Shields women on, what they claimed was, an innocent excursion to the coast. The mother and daughter were seen recording details of passing shipping in a notebook and a Police Constable confiscated the book and

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[863] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1939-1945.
[864] Ingleton, R, *The Gentlemen at War*, pp 286-287.

arrested them. They were later fined £5 apiece (£200 today) and were cautioned that if it had been thought that there was any traitorous intent they would have been sent to prison.[865]

Crimes that did show substantial increases on Tyneside were almost all minor infractions of the lighting restrictions,[866] or those relating to rationing. Whilst those relating to lighting were often a sign of no more than carelessness on behalf of the accused, offences against rationing regulations were more serious. Because the rationing system was created in part to ensure a fair share for all, and to protect the meagre stocks of the country, it could be argued that infractions of the rules were a clear indication of a lack of community spirit. There was most probably an extensive black market for foodstuffs on Tyneside, with much of this being controlled by career criminals who used theft to obtain food stocks. Many black market goods were sold 'under the counter' to regular customers.[867] One Newcastle family, however, found themselves black marketeers through circumstance. The father was employed as a cook at a nearby military post where a clerical error had resulted in ten times the amount of food being supplied as was required. This food should have been either returned or destroyed but instead the cook collected the surplus and sold this on the black market around Newcastle. The family sold meat, eggs, butter, cheese, and other scarce foodstuffs to local businesses and private individuals, in the process making a comfortable living.[868] The culprits were never caught and the scheme only came to an end when their father was posted away.

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[865] *The Times*, June 1st 1940, p 3.
[866] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, November 23rd 1940, and again January 16th 1942.
[867] For a detailed discussion of the black market, nationally, see, Thomas, D, *An Underworld at War. Spivs, Deserters, Racketeers and Civilians in the Second World War* (London: John Murray, 2003), pp 131-159.
[868] Anonymous correspondence, 2001.

Herein is one of the difficulties with assessing crime of this type on Tyneside. Although such activities appear to have been relatively rare on wartime Tyneside it is clear that there was a thriving black market. Undoubtedly such activities were more common than the official records reflect. For, unless those involved were caught in the act of purloining or selling the black market goods, it remained very difficult to obtain evidence sufficient for subsequent conviction. The very fact that this group of part time inexperienced criminals could operate their scheme undetected implies that, for many Tyneside residents, the black market was not seen as a great offence. Certainly, it would appear that shortage of customers was never a problem. Herein is one of the perplexities of wartime society. Whilst the majority, if asked, would have declared themselves against all forms of black market activity, the illegal trade could only prosper, as indeed it did, if there were sufficient numbers of people willing to obtain black market goods.

The war introduced increased opportunities for crime. Not only did the blackout provide a cover of darkness for criminals but many houses on Tyneside were left unoccupied for substantial periods, whether due to war damage, evacuation, or other circumstances. In order to enable ease of access to ARP workers in the case of fire it was made illegal to lock internal doors and to board up windows. All of these circumstances combined to facilitate criminal activities, especially housebreaking. The damage suffered by houses during air raid resulted in broken windows and the exposure of private property meaning that there was greater temptation to criminal elements. These elements, already emboldened by the above factors, had to contend with police forces that were struggling to maintain their standards. The police were drained of available manpower and, despite the efforts of the war reserve and the

special constabulary, those who were left were often less suited to law enforcement than the men that they had replaced.

Under the above circumstances it is unsurprising that petty theft also seems to have increased slightly on Tyneside during the war. Most of these thefts were of minor items such as bicycles. In 1941 there was a spate of thefts from allotments and gardens, presumably because demand for these items was at the time high.[869] Whilst these crimes were irksome to the local population they are insufficient in scale to suggest that a significant proportion of the population of Tyneside were lacking in community spirit or dedication to the national effort. To some degree they simply represent the usual, peacetime, levels of crime, except that the targets of the theft were changing according to the wartime situation. There were even allegations that the police themselves were adding to this rise in petty theft, usually these allegations were un-witnessed suspicions of the looting of bomb damaged properties.[870] Although most of these allegations were unsubstantiated, or merely rumours, a recovered bicycle became the core of a more concrete allegation of theft against a Superintendent of Newcastle City Police in 1944. The bicycle in question was recovered unattended from an air raid shelter in Heaton and taken to East End Police Station where it was entered into the lost property log book. The bike later vanished from the station and a forged claim that the owner had reclaimed it was found in the log book. The property book itself was then lost. A Sergeant based at the station accused his new Superintendent who denied the allegations and claimed that the Sergeant had previously threatened him, the case was never proven.[871]

Looting from bomb damaged sites was a more serious charge and there were several occasions when residents of the area were faced with such behaviour. Two

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[869] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, September 12th 1941.
[870] Interview NS/RA, 2002.
[871] TWAS: MD/NC/274/20. Watch Committee minute book, May 12th 1944, pp 397-398.

men were convicted at Newcastle of looting from bomb damaged property in September 1940.[872] Their case was one of just 426 similar charges dealt with nationally that year. The definition of looting was problematic and, as the possible penalty for the crime was death, many borderline cases were instead downgraded to charges of larceny.[873] On Tyneside it would appear that looting was a rare crime, although, at Tynemouth a twelve year old boy was arrested and charged with the offence during the heavy raids on the 9th and 10th of April 1941.[874]

Attitudes towards alcohol provide one of the greatest contrasts of the two world wars. Whilst consumption of alcohol during the First World War was looked on as sinful,[875] the latter conflict saw little or no censure, despite some concerns that it would lead to an eroding of the moral standards of the country. Incidents of arrests for drunken behaviour increased throughout the war. Prosecutions on Tyneside, by January 1942, were up 28% on the figures for 1940 and eleven percent on the 1939 figures.[876] There were concerns voiced later in the war about an increase in the numbers of juveniles who were being served alcohol and a "tightening up" of police enforcement was initiated to combat this, apparently effectively.[877] Greater alcohol consumption also led to more numerous levels of minor violent crimes such as drunk and disorderly and minor assaults. One more serious case occurred at Newcastle on the of March 10th 1944. A night-time dance at the ever-popular Oxford Galleries dance hall had attracted a large crowd who did not have tickets. Three Police Constables, who were on duty at the scene, requested that the crowd disperse. Three

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[872] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, September 27th 1940.
[873] For a more detailed discussion of the problems posed by looting see, Ingleton, R, *The Gentlemen at War*, pp 265-273.
[874] North East Diary website [http://www.bpears.org.uk/NE-Diary/Inc/ISeq_15.html], 2004
[875] For a discussion of the Temperance movement of World War One Britain see, DeGroot, G J, *Blighty*, pp 230-250.
[876] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, January 30th 1942.
[877] *Ibid*, November 5th 1943 – December 3rd 1943.

drunken youths refused and became violent whereupon one of the officers removed a suspect from the premises. Outside the dance hall the officer, a PC Peart, was attacked by the three men and was kicked and punched to the ground suffering a lost tooth, abrasions, and severe bruising. The three men were detained and convicted of the attack. The two ringleaders, who were brothers, were each fined the sum of two pounds (£80 today) and sentenced to three months hard labour. The third attacker was given the choice of either a twenty pound fine (£800 today) or two months hard labour. Their accusation that PC Peart had attacked them was disproved and the officers concerned were exonerated.[878] Cases like this were, however, rare on wartime Tyneside and the levels of violent crime do not appear to have risen beyond the peacetime norms. The majority of offences appear to have been committed by career criminals, given greater opportunities by the war. One such example being an Ipswich man who was convicted on several accounts of house breaking and larceny committed in several different cities across the country, including Newcastle upon Tyne, where he was arrested in March 1944.[879]

Fraudulent crimes were also made more possible, and more profitable, due to the sheer volume of government contracts that were available, combined with the levels of power that were given to local officials. The numbers of such crimes did increase and, in one case, discussed in chapter two, led to the public shaming of several Newcastle councillors. Several other prominent local businessmen were also accused of conspiracy to defraud during the war. Sir Arthur Munro Sutherland, the High Sherrif of Northumberland, was accused, alongside Robert Stanley Dalgliesh, managing director of Blyth Dry Docks and Shipbuilding Company, with bribing

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[878] TWAS: MD/NC/274/20. Watch Committee minute book, April 12th 1944, p 388.
[879] *The Times*, June 5th 1945, p 6.

admiralty officials in order to secure tenders for work.[880] Overall, however, major crime did not play a significant part in the story of wartime Tyneside with levels remaining normal whilst the vast majority of Tyneside residents maintained a law abiding and co-operative manner apart from their willingness to accept certain black market activities.

Throughout the last two years of the war thoughts on Tyneside were already turning to post-war reconstruction and a determination that the sacrifices of the last few years must not be discarded and proven to be in vain. In Newcastle, the major topic of complaint was that there was a lack of suitable housing and that basic rights put forward in the Beveridge report should be enacted as soon as was possible.[881] At the end of the war in Europe the capitulation of Germany was greeted in a restrained but happy manner whilst the commonly remembered VE Day celebrations were described as having passed in a comparatively quiet manner with church attendance being significantly up on previous weeks.[882] Perhaps this restrained acceptance of the end of the war in Europe was again influenced by local factors: a large number of Tyneside men were still fighting in Burma against the Japanese at the time.

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[880] *The Times*, May 26th 1943, p 2.
[881] TWAS: MD/NC/274/20. Watch Committee minute book, February 22nd 1945.
[882] *Ibid*, May 18th 1945.

Chapter 6

'Tyneside Can Take It?'

Myths, Morale, and Community

The relationship between the Second World War and the British people has been marked by several long-living myths. The use of the word 'myth' does not imply lies. Some historians have attempted to portray the myths of the Second World War as exactly that, and have, furthermore, attempted to debunk these myths in order to expose them as lies.[883] The historian, Malcolm Smith, correctly defines the myths of the war as being merely "a widely held view of the past which has helped to shape and to explain the present."[884] It is also true that the greater 'myth' of the Second World War is in fact a patchwork of several other myths, most of them concerned with events of 1940. It is an assumption, a confident estimate, that a cross section of the Tyneside public (or indeed anywhere in Britain), asked about the war, would mention Dunkirk, the Blitz, and, possibly, the Battle of Britain. The monolithic stature of the national myth, focusing largely on 1940, has come to be the predominant factor in national identification with regard to the war. Regional memories and experiences have been largely expurgated from the national conscious by the overarching national consensus of mythologized memory. This myth has been reshaped throughout the decades since the end of the war but has retained its power over the majority of the British public. The 'myth' of the war does indeed "offer a

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[883] See Ponting, C, *1940: Myth and Reality* (London: Cardinal, 1990).
[884] Smith, M, *Britain and 1940*, p 2.

popular memory [to the British people] which explains the past and the present ... A social group or a nation becomes a social group or nation only when it has a common mythology, and a common sense of the past is a very significant element in the collective identity of any interpretive community."[885]

Thanks to their longevity and complexity, these myths have become an accepted feature of the British national character. The myths concern the pressures faced while being on the losing side in the early stages of the war: pressed back in the field, ill-prepared in military or civilian terms, and facing, for the first time, the full-scale extension of the conflict into the home front. A collective feeling emerged of Britain standing alone as the sole hope of the free world. The sentiment soon penetrated the psyche of the British people very deeply. Moreover, the psychological imprint of this sense of heroic and stoic isolation lived on long after hostilities subsided. These sentiments also connected with another emotion – a shared bravery associated with the idea of being attacked without being cowed. People in Britain felt they were demonstrating an ability 'to take it'. This bullish, and often competitive, pride was behind what coalesced as the myth of the 'blitz spirit'. This itself combined with the myth that everyone 'pulled together' throughout the war; that the British people were united firmly behind the war effort as one unified whole.

Of course, for the British, the first year of the war was characterised by a series of reversals on the field of battle. The fall of France and the Low Countries, and the resultant evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk in 1940, gave rise to yet another myth: the 'Dunkirk spirit'. The idea that the Dunkirk evacuation was the epitome of pluck in the face of overwhelming odds, a victory of the mind rescued from a military defeat, soon entered the national consciousness and

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[885] *Ibid.*

remains there. It came to characterise the supposed pugnacious determination of the British people, and it continues to do so. Dunkirk also sparked a sharp rise in nationalistic pride, as the evacuation, by a flotilla of ordinary boat-owners, of a bedraggled, defeated army became a triumph of British spirit and of amateur ability to muddle through. Although, in fact, the majority of men were brought out by the Royal Navy and many of the 'small boats' were also manned, at least partially, by regular servicemen, Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) personnel, or by members of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR).[886] Operation Dynamo (the operational codename given to the attempt to extricate the British Expeditionary Force) was plagued with a shortage of the small vessels that could get directly into the Dunkirk beaches, especially fishing boats. For example, the port of Deal sent only two volunteers from approximately 200 local fishermen.[887]

The subsequent characterisation of Britain's World War as 'the People's War', was predicated upon this series of overlapping ideas and events. This then introduced several sacrosanct views into the British people's popular view of their forebears' war. In this formulation, the war was felt to have suspended and then broken down the class barriers that characterised pre-war society. A Canadian diplomat based in London during 1940 noted that one result of the war was that "English men and women of different classes, localities, sets and tastes are for the first time talking to each other."[888] The war was a time when the British were said to unite behind their political leaders, particularly after the demise of Chamberlain, and when many of those most closely associated with the policy of appeasement had been forced from office.

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[886] Harman, N, *Dunkirk. The Necessary Myth* (London: Coronet, 1981), pp 141-255.
[887] *Ibid*, p 164.
[888] Calder, A, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 2002), p 34.

The idea that the 'People's War' disrupted the traditional class system of Britain, and that class resentment faded during the war, as everyone pulled together in a common cause, can be disputed from an analysis of the situation on Tyneside. It was, of course, inevitable that, despite the working-class identity of Tyneside, many of the people given responsibility for local leadership during the war would be from local authorities, the police, or the services, and not be representative of the working class. The preponderance of local dignitaries in positions of power thus proves little. The distinctive class snobbery that existed on Tyneside, as it did throughout the nation, could be seen throughout the war in the police intelligence reports.[889] These expressed worries that it was the children of the lower classes from the "poorer areas" who returned from their evacuation billets and caused chaos by running wild, increasing juvenile crime. Although it is a sad fact that children from the poorer areas were more likely to turn to crime. It was also reflected in the worry that was expressed over the growth in popularity of the Anglo-Soviet Committees. It was claimed that the meetings were regularly being frequented by "people of a better type."[890] Local trade associations also continued to reflect a distinct class bias through their continued resistance to increased workers rights and wages. The Licensed Trade Employer's Association, complaining regarding a committee that had proposed increased wages for workers in the catering industry, went so far as to allege that "Mr Bevin appeared to be taking advantage of his position to inflict Socialist ideas upon the country."[891] Such examples of continuing class friction, taken along with the complaints over unfair rationing, do not mesh with the belief that class

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[889] For a discussion of the class structure that existed on Tyneside during the period, see Goodfellow, D M, *Tyneside: the social facts 2nd ed.* (Co-operative Printing Society, 1941).
[890] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, November 7th 1941.
[891] TWAS: EM/LT/1/1: Licensed Trade Employer's Association, minute book, annual meeting, October 14th 1942.

barriers had been broken down by the war and would seem to show that the class structure was still deeply entrenched on Tyneside.

The popular view of the blitz was that the British people exhibited great fortitude and moral rectitude, as well as a considerable amount of cheerfulness and stoic endurance. This ideal very quickly coalesced into the myth of a 'blitz spirit'. This has persisted in the British consciousness and is still a powerful factor in the popular memory of the war. There is compelling evidence to suggest that this was indeed the case and that "the final achievement of so many Britons was enormous enough. Maybe monumental is not putting it too high."[892] Examples exist from all over the country of people continuing with their daily routine of work despite suffering aerial bombardment. In Coventry, after the massive attack on the night of November 14th, into the early hours of the 15th, 1940, the majority of people attempted to go back to work normally despite the difficulties that they faced and the harrowing trials of the previous few hours.[893]

This would appear to be comparable to the response to air raids on much of Tyneside as well. After a heavy raid on the area during April 24th / 25th 1941, in which a total of 75 civilians were killed, morale was described as being good and a month later it was being reported that there was little shortfall in productivity and that, "Air raids have not weakened the morale of the public."[894] A sharp raid, lasting only an hour, on the night of September 1st 1941 led to the deaths of 69 people in the area and the strategically important New Bridge Street Goods Station was destroyed by fire. This raid came at a time of industrial unrest on Tyneside but, as was shown in some other areas, it would appear that the raid completely failed to significantly dent morale. There was no sign of panic, either during the raid or in its aftermath.

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[892] Harrisson, T, *Living through the Blitz* (London: Penguin, 1990), p 278.
[893] Longmate, N, *Air Raid. The Bombing of Coventry, 1940* (London: Hutchinson, 1976), p 160.
[894] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, May 10th – 26th 1941.

However, a large number of evacuees, many of them from the suburbs of the city, did leave the city shortly following this attack. Most had returned a fortnight later suggesting that this was a reaction of the middle-classes of the city who could afford to send their children out of the city at short notice and then return once danger had appeared to have passed.[895] As such this represented a negative, although sensible, reaction to a severe incident, one which had been relatively rare in Newcastle upon Tyne. Other areas of Tyneside, especially along the banks of the Tyne, had experienced such incidents on more regular occasions. Raids on April 10th – 25th 1941, led to 182 civilian deaths, with the majority concentrated along the banks of the river, although 47 were killed in Newcastle.[896]

Figure 24. Firemen working in the ruins of the New Bridge Street Goods Station.[897]

[895] *Ibid*, September 12th 1941.
[896] Of the 182 casualties from these raids seventeen were in Wallsend, 36 in Tynemouth and North Shields, fifteen in Whitley Bay, two in Shiremoor, four in Seghill, two in Blyth, 47 in Newcastle upon Tyne, and 59 in either Jarrow or South Shields.
[897] Photograph © Newcastle Chronicle and Journal Ltd.

Figure 25. Firemen fight to contain the blaze inside the Goods Station.[898]

With the increasing frequency of air raids becoming more problematic throughout 1940 and especially 1941 it was imperative that the ARP Organisations functioned efficiently. The requirements for the rapid creation of a comprehensive system of Air Raid Precautions and Civil Defence organisations placed undoubted strain on the local authorities of Tyneside. The efforts required of local authorities could occasionally prove to be too great, as was exposed by the crisis that enveloped Newcastle City Council in 1944, as discussed in chapter six. There were also a series of lesser problems that aroused complaints from the general public. This was not a situation that was unique to the area and similar difficulties can be traced in the majority of regions of Britain throughout the war. Indeed, the Tyneside authorities seem to have, with the exception of certain aspects of Newcastle's organisation, succeeded in creating a relatively efficient system. Although these systems were not tested by bombing raids to the extent that some other areas were it would appear that when bombing raids did affect the area the local organisations generally coped in a

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[898] Photograph © of the Newcastle Chronicle and Journal.

professional and efficient manner. Standards of behaviour within the Air Raid Precautions Services at ground level would also appear to back up the 'blitz spirit' argument. Despite these amateurs, often responding to serious incidents for the first time, lack of experience they would appear to have dealt with harrowing and disturbing scenes with calm professionalism, something which in turn spread confidence and reassurance amongst the general populace.

The local population adjusted to the air raids in a remarkably quick time. The lull of the 'Phoney War' had created a breathing space which acted as a suitable period of mental adjustment, allowing the majority to prepare themselves for the coming tests. Confidence in the ability of the local community to 'take it' rose and by February 1941 this new found confidence was being exhibited by the very small numbers of those who were still carrying their gas masks.[899]

Much of the rationale behind the myths of a 'blitz spirit' and of the entire country 'pulling together', as of a 'Dunkirk spirit', stemmed from the strong sense of national identity that was fostered by official propaganda and by the exigencies of life in wartime Britain. In a total war situation the development of a firm national identity is a common and powerful factor. The majority of British people during the Second World War were no exception and, thanks largely to common perceptions of a national identity aided by official propaganda efforts, realised that, because Britain was at war, they were "in it together."[900] Whilst this is true to an extent, it would appear that the feeling of solidarity and commitment, weak throughout the phoney war, was reinforced even further by the events in France which meant that an invasion of Britain was itself a distinct possibility. It was this direct threat to the 'British' way of life that was the key in the unification of patriotic feeling and defiant

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[899] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, February 14th 1941.
[900] Rose, S O, *Which People's War*, p 286.

determination. The physical threat to the country appears to have united disparate groups under a national identity. This is unsurprising, the sense of nationality is an important factor in the formation of identity and the sense of national belonging is often heightened at times of national crisis. This sense of belonging, of being "a member of an organic community" is one which can be "incredibly emotionally compelling", especially when the organic community is under threat from an external source.[901] It was recognised by the second year of the war that, "One component of high morale is obviously a feeling of national unity."[902]

National identity, in common with other collective identities can, however, be fragile and is open to multiple interpretations. It is also an ever-changing perception and once the common phrase "we are all in this together" is analysed and exactly who the "we" refers to, and what "together" means is specified then "the singularity of that identity is exposed as being false."[903] Examples of this breakdown can be seen in the frequent complaints of the people of Tyneside, on a wide range of locally specific subjects including: shortages; unfair rationing systems; lack of publicity; the blackout; and other general inconveniences. It is also shown in the continuation of the workers' struggle against the perceived unfair systems of management during the period.

Despite the popular conception of the 'British people' as a united whole during the war it is abundantly clear that regional identities were not completely subsumed. This was visibly recognised at all levels from industrial disputes, which often continued to be centred on locally specific agreements and conditions, to governmental reports on the area. It can be argued that Tyneside had developed a strong regional identity from as early as the late Sixteenth Century. This was largely

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[901] *Ibid.*
[902] Ruch, F L, 'The Problem of Measuring Morale', *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 15, 4 (December 1941), p 226.
[903] *Ibid*, p 285.

based on the region's growing dependence upon the rapidly expanding, and nationally vital, carboniferous economy. Since the industrial revolution the workers of Tyneside had proven to be the most singularly important part of the regional community. Developing a nationwide, if not worldwide, reputation and establishing a strong, and unique, sense of community. It has even been suggested that, in Newcastle (and the concept can be extended to cover much of Tyneside), "the dominant ethos, the 'establishment' if you like, is – rarity! – working class".[904] Despite this culture, Newcastle did have a significant middle class population. Indeed, it had the largest middle class in the North East. Policy makers on wartime Tyneside continued to be comprised of the upper echelons of local society but the wartime conditions ensured that they were compelled to reflect the views and wishes of the majority.

Whilst this is undoubtedly true, there were, and indeed still are, separate identities that were apparent within the region.[905] Differences, however slight, existed between those who lived in the coalfield area, in the north and east of the region, and those who lived in the armaments and shipbuilding areas along the Tyne. Even these identities were different when compared with those who lived in the suburbs of Newcastle upon Tyne, the coastal area around Whitley Bay, and the more rural western parts of the Tyne valley. Despite this, it was still believed that "Industrially, commercially and to a large extent socially, Tyneside is a unit."[906] This was largely a result of the "daily movement up and down and across the river."[907] Every town on Tyneside, with the sole exception of Newcastle upon Tyne itself, experienced a significant daily movement of people to work in other parts of the area. In Gateshead

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[904] Lancaster, B, 'Sociability and the City', in Colls, R, and Lancaster, B (eds), *Newcastle upon Tyne. A Modern History* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2001), p 340.
[905] See Goodfellow, D M, *Tyneside: the social facts*.
[906] PRO: BT 64/3260. Report on Tyneside compiled by Professor Allen, September 1943, p 1.
[907] *Ibid.*

this proportion was said to be as high as 60%.[908] This was an undoubted factor in the development, and evolution, of a vibrant and strong Twentieth Century regional identity on Tyneside.

The sense of belonging to a community at war bonded sometimes disparate groups together under a common banner. Some believed that "morale is fundamentally a conception of oneself as a member of a group."[909] An awareness of being on trial was prevalent, not just on Tyneside, but in most regions, although, at the commencement of hostilities, this awareness was dominated by an almost irrational fear of the apocalyptic results of bombing. This awareness was altered after the first bombs had fell and was rapidly assimilated into the overall myth of the 'blitz spirit' in that community pride dictated that when it was Tyneside's turn to experience bombing a mould of expected behaviour had already been cast by the reactions, and indeed the media portrayals of, those who had gone before. The communities of London's East End being the focal example held up at this early point in the war. The moral pressure that the community itself exerted on individual members cannot be underestimated and it would appear that, "the primitive instincts of self-preservation and self interest – themselves heightened in times of danger and disorder – frequently [were] overridden by the group norms of the tribe at war."[910] The sense of belonging to a community can result in the aspirations and the impact of shared group experiences exercising a control over the individual's conception of self.[911] It was this sense of 'community spirit' that influenced so many Tyneside residents to behave in such a steadfast manner throughout the war. By acknowledging that they belonged to the community they gained a sense of acceptance, of belonging, at the cost of

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[908] *Ibid.*
[909] Zorbaugh, H, 'The Morale Needs of Youth', *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 16, 4 (December 1942), p 242.
[910] MacKay, R, *Half the Battle*, p 259.
[911] Zorbaugh, H, 'The Morale Needs of Youth', p 243.

taking on the goals and values of the community identity. The value of belonging to a community in wartime was recognised in the aftermath of the blitz, where, "a cursory survey...would indicate that morale was highest in persons whose lives were best integrated with that of the community...that morale was facilitated as persons were drawn...into closer relationship with one another".[912]

The competitive spirit of communities also acted to ensure that the majority of Tyneside residents wanted to be seen to be equally capable of standing up to bombing as other British communities had. Furthermore, this competitiveness was found inside Tyneside itself with the residents of, for example, North Shields becoming quite proud of being one of the most heavily bombed parts of the area, despite the casualties. This can be evinced in the tone of the summary of air raids published in the local newspaper before the war had ended.[913] Whilst the evidence of a unifying, self sacrificing and egalitarian 'blitz spirit' is apparent it must also be said that there were periods and incidents that would seem to contradict this spirit, such as the two men who were imprisoned for looting bomb damaged Newcastle properties during the height of the blitz period of summer 1940.[914] Such activity is putatively incongruent with the myth of the blitz but it must be stated that this type of behaviour was an exception to that of the vast majority of the citizens of Tyneside who embodied a spirit of stoic determination despite their fears. This was not the case in every area that experienced bombing. For example, the people of Manchester appear to have reacted in a much less sanguine manner. By early January of 1941 morale in the city was very poor with "an atmosphere of barely restrained depression" apparent to visitors.[915] This was at a time when Newcastle was reporting that "morale remains

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[912] *Ibid*, p 244.
[913] *The Shields Evening News*, October 13th 1944, p 1.
[914] TWAS: MD/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, September 27th 1940.
[915] Harrisson, T, *Living through the Blitz*, p 244.

excellent", despite rumours of an upcoming heavy enemy attack on the city.[916] Mass Observation members came to the conclusion that the comparatively poor morale in Manchester, as compared to Liverpool or Newcastle, was partially a result of a lack of communal identity, combined with poor leadership from the local authority.[917]

Community, and class, links on Tyneside were particularly strong. This was especially true of those places that suffered the heaviest concentration of bombing, predominantly working class areas where many families had lived in close proximity for generations. This was to prove to be a mixed blessing during bombing. Whilst it resulted in people being willing to help their neighbours, going so far as to work as voluntary rescue squads in the aftermath of air raids in some cases, it also meant that heavy casualties cast an even greater pall over the entire community. The deep-seated bonds in such areas often resulted in residents displaying intense emotional reactions, both positive and negative, to shared wartime experiences.

The existence and strength of a so-called community spirit has become a widely accepted 'fact' of our national recollection of wartime Britain. A definition of community, however, has proven to be problematic.[918] In accordance with the definitions of those who assessed morale at the time, the perception of community during the war can be said to have consisted of a variety of cascading cultural networks. These could be interconnected or stand-alone networks, ranging in scale from the basic family unit, to the street of residence, to entire neighbourhoods, to the region as a whole. There were also a variety of different community networks that applied to individuals separately of each other. These often included relationship networks formed within the workplace or within the voluntary services that were

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[916] TWAS: MD/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, December 20th 1940.
[917] Harrisson, T, *Living through the Blitz*, pp 244-247.
[918] Indeed, many sociologists prefer the term 'social network system' which was coined during the 1960s sociological debate on the subject of community, but wartime studies used the word 'community'.

created as a response to the wartime situation. For example, the often strong sense of comradeship that was exhibited by many members of local Home Guard units.

The feeling of being a part of a local community, whether the term is being used to describe a family unit, a street, or a whole neighbourhood, played an important role in sustaining morale. Accounts of those who experienced the war on Tyneside are littered with references describing how strong a 'community spirit' existed at the time and the way in which, "everybody helped one another."[919] A wartime resident of heavily bombed Wallsend remembered how, "good neighbourly relations prevailed in those days."[920] These were all indicative of the strong neighbourhood identity that permeated much of Tyneside.[921] One former ARP messenger remembers that the overarching feeling on Tyneside was one of determination and cheerful optimism, with people genuinely believing that, despite setbacks, the war would eventually be won.[922] Whilst another, a young mother in 1941, had sad recollections of the war, but also wistful memories of how everyone helped one another.[923] This would appear to tally with the official assessment of feeling on Tyneside, even during 1940. It was reported that there was a spirit of confidence regarding, "the official outcome of the war and that most people expect it will be a long one."[924] It would appear from these examples that the majority of Tyneside residents had made an assessment, sober or bullishly optimistic, of the situation, were united behind the war effort and believed in its eventual success; a defining aspect of 'good morale'. This contradicts some recent opinions expressed on

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[919] Correspondence from Mrs M Playle, 2001.
[920] North Shields Library website [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk/Memories/memory_32.html], April 2004.
[921] This is largely true, despite the peculiar class distribution that did exist on Tyneside. For example, many of the middle classes lived in Gosforth, and did not consider themselves to be either Geordies or part of Tyneside culture.
[922] Correspondence from Mr T Smith, 2001.
[923] Correspondence from Mrs M Playle, 2001.
[924] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, April 25th 1940.

the state of the optimism of the British public.[925] Despite the experiences of Mollie Panter-Downe of workers redoubling their efforts after the victory at El-Alamein it would appear that, on Tyneside, both victory and defeat could serve to inspire the workforce. This was reflected by the increase in the productivity of Tyneside shipyard workers upon hearing the news of heavy naval losses. Initial consternation rapidly gave way to renewed determination.

It is noticeable that in all the accounts which I received, through interviews, private correspondence, or via the world-wide web, not one expressed any doubt that the war would eventually be won. Yes, some contributors expressed the fact that they were fearful during the war, or that some terrible events occurred, but there is no trace of defeatism. Of course, this may be simply that such emotions were not expressed at the time and that since Britain was victorious such admissions now would seem out of keeping with the national myth of stoic determination and the will to win. However, it does seem remarkable that there should be such consistency and this does imply, although it is impossible to guarantee, that morale and confidence in victory remained high throughout Tyneside. The prevailing attitude seems to be summed up as though the situation was at times bleak confidence in eventual victory remained strong.

Many of the community networks described above had existed, to greater or lesser degrees, on Tyneside before the war. However, the confusion of war introduced complicating factors into established community networks. The billeting of members of the regular armed forces, foreign military personnel, and others all had an impact on the established community, whilst the process of mass evacuation at the beginning of the war and the local billeting of children from London during the period of the V1 and V2 attacks, as well as the exigencies of wartime work or service, often

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[925] MacKay, R, *Half the Battle*, p 258.

led to the dislocation of that most basic communal network, the family unit. The willingness of families in allowing their children to return home from evacuation billets despite the risk of aerial attack reflects the depth of these communal links, even when placed under wartime stresses.

The bombing of Tyneside, however, led to a shift in some definitions of community. It would appear that the people of Tyneside, in common with other areas, withdrew into smaller, more isolated, groups after they had undergone the experience of aerial bombardment. Rather than feeling themselves to be part of the community of Tyneside the victims often narrowed their definition of belonging and instead became concerned only with their own town, street, or family. This can be seen from the reaction to the worst incident to occur on wartime Tyneside, the destruction of Wilkinson's air raid shelter in North Shields.[926] On the night of May 3rd 1941 a bomb destroyed the communal shelter that was in the basement of Wilkinson's lemonade factory. The shelter was "extremely popular among the residents of a working class district", and, on this Saturday night, the shelter was crowded.[927] Unfortunately the machinery and ingredients in the factory above collapsed into the shelter and 105 people were killed. This was a devastating blow to the town. Morale plummeted and took some time to recover. However, the report for this period from Newcastle fails even to mention the incident and describes the state of morale as "good".[928] This would appear to show that the people of Newcastle upon Tyne, probably in common with others, were not affected adversely by a tragedy in a neighbouring town. Experiences during the war often led to communities withdrawing into ever-smaller units in order to adjust to the situation.

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[926] Described in Chapter 5.
[927] *The Shields Evening News*, May 5th 1941, p 1.
[928] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, May 10th 1941.

The level of comprehension of how localised, community, experiences fit into the more general wartime situation was demonstrated to varying degrees on Tyneside. However, it would appear that individuals found it easier to adjust to a traumatic experience by localising it, and thus, placing it within an established community network, whereupon it could become a shared experience. This would appear to back up the Home Intelligence interpretation that very few connections were made between "the bomb at the corner of our street" and the wartime position in general.[929] In this case the community location has become narrowed down to the level of people living in the same street. It appears that it was this localisation of experience that enabled the majority of the wartime public, both on Tyneside and across Great Britain, to adjust so readily to the, often testing, wartime situations that they were faced with. The localisation of experiences also helped to strengthen and to develop the community network bonds that had became vital, during the war.[930]

Reactions to air raids varied considerably across the nation. On Tyneside there are no accurately documented cases of air raid related behaviour which could be termed panic. There are anecdotal references to mental casualties caused by bombing. The day after the raid which destroyed the New Bridge Street Goods Station one local resident gave birth to twins. Several days later it was noted that the babies were twitching and a doctor was sent for, he concluded that the babies were suffering from shell shock.[931] Some local residents, especially children, were perhaps unaware of the seriousness of the situation and thought that the air raids represented the chance for adventure. This can be seen in the morale boosting pastime of shrapnel collecting that was all pervasive amongst the young boys of Tyneside. A young girl on Tyneside

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[929] NA: INF 1/264. Home Intelligence Daily Report, September 21st 1940.
[930] This concurs with the geographical 'scales theory'. This theory is an attempt to explain communities in terms of identity hierarchies.
[931] North Shields Library website [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk/Memories/memory_101.html], April 2004.

throughout the war remembered thinking of the raids as, "an adventure", and declared that she was never frightened during the war.[932] Another, a boy who was eleven when the air raids began, remembered being scared at first but coming to actually enjoy them. He did however ascribe this emotion to youthful ignorance.[933] The resilience, encouraged by ignorance, of youth often meant that it was the young who were least affected by the bombing.[934] Instead a relatively common consensus appears to have been that "the war was a source of excitement for us. At our age we did not realise the danger".[935] Although the young tended to shrug off the dangers there were some exceptions. One such case, a fifteen-year old boy at the time, remembers being sent to the doctor because he was behaving in an irrational manner. He had recently narrowly escaped serious injury in a bombing raid and was diagnosed as suffering from shock.[936]

Analysis of the morale of youths and children was an aspect often overlooked, especially early in the war, but was vitally important to the emotional state of the community. For a youth or child it is the basic family unit that represents the most important community network in their lives. "It is within the family that the first of the series of group identifications out of which morale is built takes place."[937] It was not uncommon for an individual's standard of morale to rest solely on his conception of belonging to a family community. In wartime many Tyneside youths found themselves belonging to the community that grew around the ARP services through participation with the Messenger Service. This was one of the few areas in which youth community could interact with adult community on an equal footing and proved

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[932] Anonymous correspondence, 2001.
[933] Correspondence from Mr D Charlton, 2001.
[934] For Robert Westall, his experiences of growing up on wartime Tyneside influenced his children's books. See Westall, R, *The Machine-Gunners* (London: Macmillan, 1975).
[935] Correspondence from Mr E Walker, 2001.
[936] Correspondence from MR J Jefferson, 2001.
[937] Zorbaugh, H, 'The Morale Needs of Youth', p 247.

to be important in the upkeep of youth morale as they allowed a process of "integration and identification of youth with the community".[938] This was vital as it was important that for youths, as well as adults, "war increases both the need and the opportunity for youth to feel it is part of the community, with a role to play in its life and defense."[939] The evacuation of so many Tyneside children away from the threatened areas resulted in a great degree of social dislocation to the family units that were essential to their development. The importance of the shared experience was undermined by the evacuation. The, usually, supportive family unit was disrupted with the result that many of the affected children, youths, and adults showed signs of decreased morale. Such disruption can at least be partially blamed for the rise in juvenile crime that accompanied the return of evacuees to Tyneside.[940] It has been shown that "family disruption ... seems to be as strong a predictor of self-reported and official delinquency as other major risk factors".[941] Not only were children separated from their families for varying amounts of time but, when they returned, they often found that their parents were working longer hours and there was no system of schooling in place for them. Separation from the family environment was the key factor in the expressions of homesickness or loneliness voiced by both evacuees and by their parents on Tyneside, and resulted in the majority of evacuees returning to their families within weeks or months of leaving. On occasions when entire schools were evacuated together with their teachers the bond between classes and teachers became even stronger and acted as a surrogate family unit. Despite this, many children were still returned to Tyneside at the request of their parents.

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[938] *Ibid*, p 246.
[939] *Ibid.*
[940] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Police intelligence report on conditions in Newcastle upon Tyne, February 29th 1940.
[941] Haas, H, Farrington, D P, Killias, M, and Sattar, G, 'The Impact of Different Family Configurations on Delinquency', *British Journal of Criminology*, 44, 4 (April 2004), p 520.

In order to understand some of the attitudes that prevailed on wartime Tyneside we must recognise the type of war that was being experienced. The bombing of civilians was not a battle in the conventional sense of the word. The affected civilian population could not, in any effective manner, fight back directly against the enemy overhead. They were vulnerable, battling not to win but to survive. The only victories to be had were those won by not giving in to panic and in continuing to function as normally as possible, thus contributing to both the local community and to the national war effort. This was why morale was seen as key and why this imprecise, nebulous, subject was so rigorously and continually monitored. The government placed great importance on the assessment of morale during the war, allocating substantial resources to this task. In order to recognise the significance of the morale question we must first consider the reasons behind the government's obsession with morale and, indeed, the official definition of morale itself. In the wake of the allied victory in the First World War, the belief, perpetuated by the German military, that the victory was largely attributable to the collapse of civilian morale inside Germany, and consequent revolution, became widely acknowledged. This was supported by the collapse of Russia in 1917 and the subsequent revolution. As a result it was recognised by every major European government that, in the event of another major war occurring, the question of maintaining civilian morale on the home front would be as fundamentally important as the strength of armed forces and the tactical ability of commanders. The lessons of 1917 and 1918 were a salutary reminder to the governments of the late 1930's of the "political consequences of failure to sustain the spirit and commitment of the people."[942]

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[942] Mackay, R, *The Test of War*, p137.

The question of determining morale on Tyneside, and indeed nationally, proved to be one of perplexing complexity throughout the war. Morale is an elusive concept, one which both historians and governments have struggled to define and assess. Even the definition of what exactly represents morale is one that troubled the government of the time and, indeed, it has continued to trouble historians seeking to explore the topic. Arthur Marwick described two distinct forms of morale: active and passive. Active morale was characterised by exuberant behaviour, laughing at the dangers of the war and by the extensive use of defiant gestures, whether in speech or in action. The original reaction to Dunkirk was characterised by this sort of pugnacious defiance and it can be argued that the myth of the 'Dunkirk spirit' stems from this reaction. Passive morale however evinced a quieter sort of determination, or even a grimly stoical acceptance of the situation.[943] The Mass Observation organisation, which was contracted by the government to aid the assessment of morale, came up with a more analytical definition of the subject. By 1940 the organisation offered the following definition for the term 'morale': "determination to carry on ... determination to carry on with the utmost energy, a determination based on realization of the facts of life and with it a readiness for many minor and some major sacrifices ... Good morale means hard and persistent work, means optimum production, maximum unity, reasonable awareness of the true situation, and absence of complacency and confidence which are not based on fact."[944]

As the war continued the theory of what morale actually was continued to evolve; by 1943 it was more fully developed. The definition of morale from 1943 can still be used by historians today as it is an effective and well defined tool and has been

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[943] Marwick, A, *The Home Front* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976).
[944] MacKay, R, *Half the Battle*, p 2.

further developed by historians, such as Robert MacKay.[945] Morale is split into two separate factors: attitudes and behaviour. These defining factors are further split into features indicative of either high or low standards of morale. In the case of attitudes the indicators of low morale include: panic, hysteria, depression, apathy, pessimism and defeatism. Attitudes indicative of high morale are largely the opposites of those for low morale such as: calm and cheerfulness, support for leaders and leadership structures, both military and civil, the belief that the country would ultimately be victorious and a steady commitment to any tasks or duties. The types of behaviour indicative of low morale are as follows: flight to safer areas (trekking); a build up of the shelter mentality; general grumbling and the unfair apportioning of blame; absenteeism and other forms of industrial action. Once again the positive indicators are, unsurprisingly, the opposites of the negative: cooperativeness and neighbourly feeling; high productivity and low levels of absenteeism; and a large proportion of volunteers.[946]

In purely psychological terms acute demoralisation can be split into three separate reactions: overwhelming terror which results in random activity; terror with the result that a person becomes obsessed with escape from the situation; and terror resulting in a psychoneurotic episode.[947] As there were very few instances of members of the Tyneside public requiring professional psychological assistance (although available help was limited and the prevailing spirit of the time, reinforcing the need to remain outwardly confident, could have prevented some from seeking aid, it is certainly true that instances of severe mental problems were remarkably few) this would seem to imply that the Tyneside public was at no point seriously demoralised.

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[945] *Ibid*, p 3.
[946] *Ibid*.
[947] Sullivan, H S, 'Psychiatric Aspects of Morale', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 47, 3 (November 1941), p 280.

Demoralisation is characterised by the inability to think straight and the propensity to look for any simple solution, however impractical. In the case of Britain during the war this would surely have resulted in people demanding peace with Germany at any cost, this did not happen on any large scale and, on Tyneside, the only activity of this nature was from the PPU and the Jehovah's Witnesses, although this did continue throughout the war.[948] There were those who wanted to find a peaceful solution to the war, especially after the defeat of France and the Low Countries. Several leading politicians advocated this course throughout 1939 and early 1940.[949] On Tyneside there does not appear to have been widespread support for peace overtures but there were some individuals who still maintained faith in pacifism and the policy of appeasement, including the President of the North of England Shipowners' Association and former governmental peace envoy, Lord Runciman.[950]

Some of these indicators, however, are rather vague and are easily open to misinterpretation. To take grumbling as a sign of low morale could be a mistake as, so long as it does not lead to other forms of negative behaviour, it can, and often was, merely a form of 'letting off steam' rather than a reflection of declining or poor morale. Even the incidences of flight to safer areas away from bombing have to be treated with caution. In many cases the people who were behind this behaviour, often but not always members of the middle classes, left only for the night and returned to their places of work the next day despite the increased difficulties of travel. The majority "did not go berserk ... They required neither priest nor psychiatrist."[951] It would seem that they were willing to carry on with their duties but took action to withdraw themselves from danger, and thus removed a further burden from the ARP

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[948] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1939-1945.
[949] Ponting, C, *1940. Myth and Reality* (London: Cardinal 1990), pp 96-119.
[950] TWAS: 1070/21. North of England Shipowners' Association, annual report, 1939, pp 21-23.
[951] Harrisson, T, *Living through the Blitz*, p 279.

Services. They would seem to have shown attitudes and behaviour that, when seen in the light of the above morale formula, was contradictory but the lack of true panic and hysteria would seem to imply that their morale remained, if not good, then at least steady. It would seem that the definition of morale will continue to be troublesome but the definition given above remains as a good general indicator.

The government body with the responsibility for the assessment of morale was the Ministry of Information and, on Tyneside, a substantial intelligence gathering network was fashioned. This network was composed of widely differing groups of people or organisations, spearheaded by the Ministry of Information's own Regional Officer, who was based in Newcastle along with a team of civil servants seconded from their duties to monitor morale and to ensure the relaying of positive news stories. The Regional Information Officer's were assisted by the system of Local Information Committees that were formed prior to any bombing. These aided the Regional Officer by maintaining, and utilising, contacts with local political parties, business leaders, union officials, and the press. The Local Information Committees were solely concerned with the monitoring, and improvement, of local morale. The system, however, was not operational, despite extensive planning, until March 1940, largely due to the concerns of the Labour Party.[952]

The Regional Officer was assisted by the following groups: local police force duty rooms which collated reports and Chief Constable's who sent these reports on to London; the employees of firms such as WH Smith; the censors employed by the Royal Mail; and the BBC Listeners Research Department. Mass Observation was also contracted by the Ministry to undertake inquiries into the state of morale in

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[952] McLaine, I, *The Ministry of Morale* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979), pp 46-47.

different regions and to, "survey the development and variations in morale."[953] This organisation used volunteers to gather information on local feeling and, with its distrust of officialdom, provided a counterbalance to the official intelligence reports provided by the Ministry.[954] Later in the war part time observers were also employed to gather information through informal conversation with members of the public and this also played a contributory part in the assessment of morale in both a regional and in a more general, national, manner.[955]

One factor that definitely did affect local morale was the inadequate, or inaccurate, dissemination of news, especially in the first two years of the war. This was of increasing concern to several groups: The newspaper owners who felt that their industry was being emasculated by censorship, the local officials responsible for the interpretation and reporting of regional morale, and the Ministry of Information itself. In Newcastle upon Tyne, by late 1940, the summary of intelligence reports collated by the duty room of the local police and authorised by the Chief Constable was claiming that the Ministry of Information was the subject of strong local complaint and that it was being claimed that it was the reticence of this Ministry in reporting the war news that "gave scope for rumours to spread."[956] It is important to grasp just how limited the means were of obtaining news at this time. People relied

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[953] Beaven, B, and Griffiths, J, *Mass Observation and Civilian Morale: Working Class Communities during the Blitz 1940-1941 (Mass Observation Occasional Paper, number 8)* (Brighton; University of Sussex, 1998), p 4.

[954] Mass Observation, founded by Tom Harrisson, carried out extensive social surveys during the war, not only in London but in the industrial northern towns and in Scotland. However, the information provided on Tyneside is more limited and it is often the case that the few observers who were present in the area were from outside the region and misunderstood the character of the Tyneside public. This is a common problem with Mass Observation observers of the period. Being drawn from, mainly, the middle class their observations tend to be somewhat prejudiced. As such, Mass Observation, whilst otherwise an eminently useful source of information, must be utilised with great caution.

[955] MacKay, R, *The Test of War*, pp 142-143.

[956] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle City Police, October 11th 1940.

on newspapers, newsreels in cinemas, and on the radio for news coverage.[957] In 1942 there were over 9 million radio licenses issued and it was estimated that more than 68% of the population could regularly listen to a radio broadcast.[958] The most popular daily newspaper the *Daily Express*, in 1937, enjoyed a daily circulation of almost 2.25 million.[959] Cinema audiences increased by 507 million from 1938 to 1942 and by the middle of the war the yearly cinema attendance was almost 1,500 million people.[960]

The effect on morale from a lack of faith in the reliability of British news can be seen in the increasing numbers who were believed to be listening to enemy propaganda broadcasts and, more worryingly, were willing to believe them over the official, British, news broadcasts. This also enabled the spread of rumours such as the anxiety that was experienced in the wake of an enemy broadcast which declared Newcastle to be the next target of a Coventry style aerial attack.[961] Complaints regarding the scarcity of war news continued to be voiced on Tyneside and, by January 1941, it was stated that the enemy broadcasts were more up to date than their British counterparts and that this was "the main [cause of] complaint" in the area.[962] Obviously this demonstrates a factor that had an undermining effect on the morale of Tyneside residents. As late as May 1941 it was reported that, on Tyneside, the "General feeling is that no news is bad news", and that the scarcity of war news was, once again, being heavily criticised by the general public.[963] This could and did lead to displays of pessimism, grumbling, and the spread of rumours; all signs of decaying active and passive morale. It is clear that the people of Tyneside wished to know what was

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[957] For a discussion of radio broadcasting during the war, see Briggs, A, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Volume III. The War of Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).
[958] Thorpe, A, *The Longman Companion*, p 72.
[959] *Ibid*, p 71.
[960] Browning, H E, and Sorrell, A A, 'Cinemas and Cinema-Going in Great Britain', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 111 (1954), p 134.
[961] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle City Police, December 6th – 20th 1940.
[962] *Ibid*, January 18th 1941.
[963] *Ibid*, May 26th 1941.

happening in the prosecution of the war and why and that this was vital if the morale of the area was to be sustained through a long and drawn out conflict.

The restriction of information was official policy, largely at the behest of the heads of the armed forces, but after the autumn of 1940 a perceptible change occurred. Some dissenting voices inside the Ministry of Information had already been campaigning for much greater honesty in news releases but it was the appointment of Brendan Bracken as Minister of Information in the summer of 1941 that saw the impetus gathering behind this new policy. Bracken saw that in order to maintain good morale it was necessary for the general public to feel that they were kept abreast of the situation and that they received a good supply of honest war news. He reiterated his beliefs when he said, "the people must be told the news about the war because without them and their spirit, we cannot achieve victory."[964] The view that accurate and timely news broadcasts were important to the sustenance of morale would seem to have been backed up by the experiences of the people of Tyneside who remained, throughout the war, finely attuned to overly optimistic propaganda in news broadcasts. Throughout early 1942 there were complaints over what was being perceived as the deliberately overly optimistic misrepresentation of news from the Russian front.[965]

Some influential students of morale thought that other factors should also have been taken into account during the assessment process. Stephen Taylor, the Head of Home Intelligence at the Ministry of Information, believed that the determinants of morale could be separated into material and mental factors. Included amongst the material factors were such things as food supplies, work, and adequate leisure time. He stated that mental factors that could affect morale included: beliefs in eventual

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[964] MacKay, R, *Half the Battle*, pp 145-146.
[965] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle City Police, February 27th 1942.

victory, in the equality of sacrifice being asked, and that the war was just and unavoidable. All of these factors can be seen to have affected morale on Tyneside at one time or another during the course of the war but they were often combined with other, previously discussed, factors. Obviously the subject of morale continues to be complex and an overall definition, elusive. American psychologists were faced with a similar need to define and gauge morale after that country entered the war and they appear to have come up with more democratic methods of attempting to measure public confidence. The favoured methodology was to use the opinion poll with which all Americans were already familiar along with simplified psychiatric interview techniques.[966] The efficacy of these measures was equally debatable when compared to the British system of estimating morale which, after the initial problems of 1939-1942, worked extremely efficiently.

One of the tactics employed to boost morale on Tyneside was to arrange for visits from members of the royal family or government in order to praise the workers of the area and to heighten the feeling of national inclusiveness. The policy of holding public meetings involving Cabinet Ministers was initially launched to oppose the Pacifist and Communist elements which had been campaigning since 1939. There were also concerns that the Labour Party was exploiting the wartime situation by supporting the war and by claiming the plaudits when it was seen to stand up for the rights of the people, a policy that was also employed on Tyneside later in the war by the British Communist Party. By February 1940 the meetings were more concerned with raising morale than with party politics.[967] Gauging the importance of these measures in terms of morale is problematic; it is obvious that, as a result of their localised nature, these visits had a limited scope and impact. References to the visits

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[966] Ruch, F L, 'The Problem of Measuring Morale', *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 15, 4 (December 1941), pp 221-228.
[967] McLaine, I, *The Ministry*, pp 47-48.

are made in the police reports on morale although the reports are often ambiguous. The earlier report of the visit of the Secretary of State for War, the Right Honourable Oliver Stanley, MP, in February 1940, is a good example of this. A speech given to a large audience at the City Hall in Newcastle was said to have been warmly received despite minor incidents of heckling interrupting the speech. Without knowing who was present at the meeting we cannot make any informed judgements of the degree of opposition to the Secretary's speech or whether the interruption were from some pacifist group such as the PPU.

As can be seen by the events in London, the visit by a dignitary or well-known figure could be a very effective boost to active morale, although only in a localised area and only for a short period. The tactic of using visiting dignitaries to boost morale was not confined to Tyneside, with most areas of the country benefiting from this. The tactic was not always successful, but it would seem that accounts of the King and Churchill being booed by crowds in London have been exaggerated and that the reception in London, as on Tyneside, was generally warm.[968] The royal family toured the provinces extensively during the war, with the industrial powerhouse areas, such as Tyneside and Glasgow, seeing frequent visits. These visits, such as the tour by the King and Queen to Glasgow in June 1942, included inspections of key wartime industries, especially shipbuilding, and often lasted several days.[969]

Tyneside, in common with the rest of the country, suffered from rationing and wartime shortages. This was also recognised as a possible threat to the morale of the area and the occurrences of queuing came in for especial criticism. Queuing for food was reported to be prevalent on Tyneside throughout the spring of 1941 and it was felt

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[968] Ziegler, P, *London at War 1939-1945* (London: Pimlico, 2002), pp 164-165.
[969] Osborne, B, and Armstrong, R, *Glasgow, A City at War* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2003), p 95.

that the queues occurred most often in the "poorer areas".[970] It was felt that queuing could lead to grumbling and the subsequent spreading of rumours detrimental to the maintenance of local morale and that, where possible, queuing should have been actively discouraged. This proved to be impossible and by 1943 Newcastle City Police were growing increasingly concerned about the queues of upwards of 200 women attempting to purchase commodities such as stockings.[971] The majority of those who formed the queues were of "the poorer classes".[972] However, the official views of the possible pitfalls attached to queuing are not borne out by the testimony of those who formed the queues on Tyneside. Once again this reflects the reality that grumbling and gossiping was not, necessarily, an indication of worsening, or poor, morale as was believed by the Ministry of Information and that it could actually serve to improve the situation by strengthening the bonds of community. One young girl of six who lived in western Newcastle remembers the gossip that occurred in the food queues, to which she was frequently sent by her mother, as a positive experience. She "used to love to listen to the older women chatting ... I used to run home to mam to tell her all the chat."[973] Swapping items that had been queued for amongst neighbours would appear to have been common practice, as was sending children out to queue for commodities.[974] It would appear that the queues were, for many of those forced to endure them, a factor which could provide important bonds to their local community and, indeed, the queues themselves appear to have been another link in the community networks discussed earlier.

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[970] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, May 10th 1941.
[971] *Ibid*, May 21st 1943.
[972] *Ibid.*
[973] Correspondence from Mrs S Haldane, 2001.
[974] North Shields Library website [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk/Memories/memory_32.html], April 2004.

The relationship between morale and the rationing of goods are both reciprocal and complicated. Levels of shortages and the efficiency of the system are both key to the correlation between morale and rationing. If the system of rationing is seen to be fair and well managed it provides an added sense of security and communal togetherness. When there was a perceived flaw in the system the residents of Tyneside were not slow to complain. They were prepared to sacrifice goods if it was clear that all were suffering equally, although their ability to detect unfairness remained keen throughout the war. Tyneside was particularly plagued by shortages of fresh fruit, it was claimed that the area had been almost deprived of this delicacy for almost three years.[975] Complaints made to the national press regarding this issue were only exacerbated when a consignment of bitter Seville Oranges, only good for making marmalade, for which little sugar was available, were delivered.[976] Indeed, throughout the war the rationing system would appear to have been perceived as unfair by many on Tyneside. Shortages of meat, fish, and vegetables all solicited complaints from the Tyneside public from time to time. The duality of the relationship between rationing and morale also meant that when morale was high and support for the national effort high then the system of rationing was accepted with good grace.[977] Rationing was not, however, always accepted with good grace. Many residents of Tyneside resented perceived unfairness in the system and this could reinforce the sense of injustice that had been brewing since the 1930s. Such discontent was not necessarily an indicator of diminishing support for the war effort.

Although more usually seen as being detrimental to morale, rationing could provide a boost to the well-being of some. These were usually the better off with a

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[975] *The Times*, March 9th 1944, p 5.
[976] *Ibid.*
[977] Anderson, C A, 'Food Rationing and Morale', *American Sociological Review*, 8, 1 (February 1943), p 25.

social conscience or a developed sense of patriotism. For such individuals rationing was one way in which they could achieve a sense of sacrifice, participation, and shared communal experience.[978] The policy of developing factory canteens stemmed solely from the policy of ensuring that workers had access to nutritious meals, it also created a boost in production by ensuring that workers took shorter breaks and remained on site during these meal breaks. This was a morale boosting development for workers in that it allowed them to maintain their morale whilst engaged in important war work. Alongside this, the wartime shortages also led to the establishment of pig clubs whilst the 'dig for victory' campaign resulted in gardens and allotments being cultivated with vigour. These simple measures allowed the people of Tyneside to supplement their wartime ration and served to lift morale by involving them in a social, communal, activity.

Activity was vital if the morale of Tyneside was to be kept at a high level as inactivity or activity solely concerned with the war effort could lead to boredom. Several schemes were introduced or improved to enhance the social activity of the British people during wartime. A key way of getting people involved in social activities was through the use of educational classes. The Workers Educational Association (North East Division) continued its pre-war work with a panoramic selection of classes that could be taken by anyone. These classes ranged from Economics and Social Policy to Music and Art. Obviously, the number of those who could regularly attend declined as the wartime situation worsened but even in 1941, the worst year of the war, on Tyneside, some 3,508 people were involved in the project.[979] The improvement of educational standards also led to a further

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[978] *Ibid*, p 24.

[979] TWAS: E/WEA1/7/6-9. Workers Educational Trade Union Committee: North Eastern Divisional Committee minutes, June 1st 1941 – May 31st 1942.

engagement with the possibilities of post-war reconstruction and thus also helped to sustain high morale.

The lack of an outlet for hitting back at the enemy bombers proved to be a major frustration for many and it was this emotion that provided the bedrock of the support for an extensive bombing campaign against Germany. RAF Bomber Command provided one of the few consistent boosts to morale over the course of the majority of the war. Its bombing of Germany, once it had been acknowledged by the military strategists that crews could not solely confine their aim to military installations, provided timely boosts to morale and assured the public that British forces were striking back and that the German public was on the receiving end of similar punishment to that which the British were suffering. In fact for the early years of the war the bombing campaign was marked by incompetent command, inadequate equipment, minimal results, and heavy losses. Throughout the winter of 1941 and the first months of 1942 concerns regarding the effectiveness of the bombing campaign were being expressed. The Butt Report of August 1941 backed up this pessimistic view and related that only 25% of crews claiming to have bombed a target were within five miles of it.[980] Despite the failure of this campaign the morale effect that it had on the public was immeasurable. Bomber command raids are mentioned sporadically throughout wartime intelligence reports measuring the morale of Tyneside and their impact is always positive. Attacks of a special nature, such as the raid on the Ruhr Dams or raids on Berlin, were said to have a particularly "stimulating effect on the public."[981]

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[980] Middlebrook, M and Everitt, C, *The Bomber Command War Diaries. An operational reference book 1939-1945* (Leicester: Midland, 1996), pp 220-222.
[981] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, 27th September 1940, August 15th 1941 and May 21st 1943.

The first months of the war, after the fall of Poland in 1939, were marked by confusion amongst the British population as the government refused to state exactly what the aims of the war were. The Ministry of Information became increasingly concerned with the growing scepticism and complacency of the public. The criticisms aimed at the wartime measures that were in place, including the black-out and the Civil Defence and ARP Organisations, were seen as signifying a developing complacency. No action had occurred and, as a result, apprehension quickly gave way to apathy. At Newcastle upon Tyne the main target for public dissatisfaction was the lighting restrictions.[982] The number of road deaths caused by the blackout had increased tenfold in Newcastle upon Tyne.[983] This was of course reinforced by the paucity of war news that was being released, this resulted in an emergent belief that nothing was happening and encouraged apathy and boredom with the war effort.[984]

Nationally, the first months of the war, from September 1939 to the early spring of 1940, when the impact was slight, was the period when the lowest morale was registered. This is not, however, reflected in the assessments of morale on Tyneside. Throughout 1939 the morale of the public was consistently described as being very high with only minor complaints being mentioned. Despite this there are indications that, under the surface, the confusion that the Ministry suspected to be common still existed, one report mentions "extensive reports of grumbling amongst the public".[985] A further example of one of the behavioural indicators of bad morale as recognised by the Ministry of Information. By the end of April 1940 there was a discernible upturn in assessed morale, with the reaction towards the Norwegian

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[982] *Ibid*, December 9th 1939.
[983] *The Times*, October 19th 1939, p 8.
[984] McLaine, I, *The Ministry*, pp 34-39.
[985] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, December 9th 1939.

campaign being described as particularly positive.[986] This optimism was short-lived as the ignominious end of the aforementioned campaign led to extensive criticism of the number of losses and to the muddled leadership of British forces that had been demonstrated throughout.[987] This criticism of leadership represented one of the indicators of low morale but at no point did this spill over into more general defeatism and, indeed, the majority of Tyneside residents appear to have retained their belief that victory, though not without significant cost, would be attained.

1941 was to prove difficult for Tyneside. This was the year that saw the heaviest bombing of the region (82% of the civilian fatalities suffered in the area occurred in this year), and this was at times reflected in official estimates of the state of morale in the area. Concerns were raised throughout the year regarding food shortages and allegations of profiteering were made against some shopkeepers. The "increasing dissatisfaction over the uneven distribution of food" was beginning to adversely affect the morale of the area. This was a major concern as it was felt by the Ministry of Information that one of the non-material factors key to the maintenance of high morale was that people were "convinced that all sections and classes of the community were suffering and enduring equally."[988] Uneven distribution of food, and the bombing of predominantly working-class fed feelings of class and regional distinction. The emotions engendered were detrimental to the state of morale. As a result of the shortages queuing was starting to become a more regular occurrence in the area, yet another threat as perceived by the Ministry.

The shortage of food and goods was not the only threat to the morale of Tyneside during this period as local defences also came in for criticism during the year and there were protests that important installations, especially shipyards, were

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[986] *Ibid*, April 25th 1940.
[987] *Ibid*, May 9th 1940.
[988] McLaine, I, *The Ministry*, p 113.

not being adequately protected from air attack whilst, throughout the first half of the year, the Peace Pledge Union and the Jehovah's Witnesses were more active than they had been over the previous 12 months. Several incidents of peace slogans being chalked on walls were noted, a sure sign that morale was at a low ebb amongst some sections of the community. Worryingly, industrial unrest was also on the increase after the relative peace of the previous year; yet another sign of declining morale and commitment. The war news, which was almost unrelentingly bad until the victory at El Alamein was announced in November 1942, also began to affect local morale and a calming speech made by Churchill was described as having been "needed to reassure some sections of the community."[989] Towards the end of the year that old bugbear, complaints regarding the blackout, appeared once more, with a small campaign to relax lighting restrictions.[990] Feeling regarding this matter had never really gone away with one man even suing Newcastle Corporation for injuries and damages sustained when he crashed his motorcycles into an unlit air raid shelter.[991] All of these factors would appear to represent a serious diminishment of morale on Tyneside. Grumbling, the apportioning of blame, and industrial action are all behavioural indicators of bad morale whilst depression and pessimism, which it would appear were present, are both attitudinal indicators of poor morale.

Despite all of these factors, however, the general assessment claimed that the state of morale on Tyneside remained high throughout 1941; but, as can be seen by the examples given above, the situation was becoming increasingly volatile. In contradiction to the poor indicators already mentioned, however, there were also signs of positive morale throughout the year. Despite the heavy bombing that occurred, it appears that the people of Tyneside reacted well under pressure and were not unduly

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[989] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, May 10th 1941.
[990] *Ibid*, October 10th 1941.
[991] *The Times*, June 16th 1941, p 2.

panicked by the aerial onslaught. At the start of the year there are indications of complacency amongst the populace as very few were carrying gas-masks and the majority expressed the view that the threat of enemy gas attack was not to be taken seriously.[992] The shelter mentality that was seen as one of the behavioural indicators of low morale was not to be seen in the area. Sometimes the unwillingness of some residents of Tyneside to take to the shelters proved a tragic decision. Of the 50 civilians killed in Newcastle upon Tyne during the air raid of April 25th it was said that many could have been saved if they had been in their shelters.[993] Towards the end of the year morale would seem to have been showing signs of improving and by the end of August was said to be very high. Even the heavy air raids of September failed to dent this assessment and, "despite severe attack morale remained excellent and there was no sign of panic."[994]

Even the heavy air attacks on the ports and provincial cities lasting from the latter half of 1940 until May 1941, there were 352 civilians killed on Tyneside between June 1940 and May 1941 whilst heavy attacks on the area over a period of five months from August 1941 left a further 272 casualties, failed to cause the universal panic that had been predicted before the war. Doctors were surprised by the rugged ability of the British people to adapt to aerial bombing. The frequency of "genuine psychiatric air-raid casualties [had] been much lower than might have been expected".[995]

1942 has been presented as the turning point of the war, even though the positive news of victory at El Alamein did not come until November. At the time there were increasing worries that war weariness would serve to erode morale and

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[992] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, February 14th 1941.
[993] *Ibid*, May 10th 1941.
[994] *Ibid*, September 12th 1941.
[995] McLaine, I, *The Ministry*, p 108.

that, as people adjusted to the wartime routine, slackness and apathy could become larger concerns. There was some evidence of carelessness creeping into the area as reflected by the laxity of the blackout, with the local police organising a crackdown on offences of this type.[996] Shortages of beer were still causing problems with a subsequent negative effect on local morale. The propensity for bad war news to have a negative effect on morale continued with the assumed ease of German fleet movements resulting in criticism alongside that of the situation in Singapore.[997] Indeed, concerns over the naval war continued to dominate and the loss of many merchant seamen from the area was responsible for further lowering of morale.[998] The faults within the rationing system continued to erode local morale with green vegetables only being available to "those who can afford them".[999] Continued strikes, including that of the several hundred dockers described in chapter two, also reflected signs of worsening morale in the area. Once again grumbling would appear to be the most common indicator of worsening morale and, as described above, this could be seen as simply an emotional release valve.

Although the number, and frequency, of strikes was increasing it is clear that the majority of these actions did not win public support and that many were seen as being unpatriotic. Positive war news also gave a boost to morale later in the year with the news of the successes of local regiments in Egypt being particularly welcomed,[1000] a feature that was to re-appear in 1943.[1001] It is clear that, despite some evidence of poor spirits, the majority of people continued to exhibit indicators of good morale with local places of entertainment proving popular and experiencing "phenomenal

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[996] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, January 16th – 30th 1942.
[997] *Ibid*, February13th – 27th 1942.
[998] *Ibid*, June 17th 1942.
[999] *Ibid*, March 27th 1942.
[1000] *Ibid*, November 7th 1942.
[1001] *The Times*, June 25th 1943, p 2.

patronage". Over the Christmas period pantomimes also proved popular in the locality, with extra performances having to be organised, and helped to raise morale.[1002] All of these are reflections of cheerfulness and optimism and, as such, reflect positive morale.

From 1943 onwards, the worries regarding increasing war weariness played a larger role. These latter years of the war were characterised by minor, and then major, victories but proved to be a long and drawn out slog for those on the home front. The people of Tyneside were still expected to provide support for the war effort but were now entering their fourth year of rationing, shortages and blackout. It was thought to be inevitable that morale would suffer. The text of the official intelligence reports deals with this period more scantily than previous years but the overall impression is one of weary stoicism highlighted by military victories which provided timely boosts to local morale. Food and commodity shortages continued to be the greatest morale concern with queuing becoming commonplace, although, as described above, some aspects of queuing could provide a positive morale boost. It was 1943 that saw the only breaking up of a political gathering on Tyneside during the war. This was during a large outside meeting of the peace Pledge Union held on Newcastle Quayside. Although a large crowd was present several people objected to one of the main speakers and the police were called upon to close down the gathering.[1003] Obviously the mere fact that the PPU could organise and hold such a large meeting indicates that there was some demand for settlement even at this late stage of the war. However, the strenuous objection of many local people to the meeting is also evidence of patriotism and exhibits the 'will to win' that was seen as a positive sign of morale by the authorities.

[1002] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, January 5th 1943.
[1003] *Ibid*, December 3rd 1943.

Throughout 1944 and 1945 the overall morale of the area remained high despite the increasing weariness of the population. The greatest example of poor morale was to be found in the increasing industrial unrest that persisted on Tyneside throughout the year. There are indications, primarily the lack of public support being expressed, that this unrest was still viewed by the majority of the population as unpatriotic behaviour. When the four organisers of the Apprentices Strike of 1944, described in chapter two, were charged with encouraging and providing support for an illegal strike, and tried, there was very little public reaction. This indicates that many people agreed with the action taken by the government in this matter and were still united behind the war effort.[1004] It was during this year that many on Tyneside began to see the 'beginning of the end' of the war and this gave a renewed boost to the state of morale in the area. The relaxation of ARP duties, the standing-down of the Home Guard, D-Day, and the lifting of some lighting restrictions, all promised a quick return to normality, and held out hope for a quick and decisive victory. There were still knocks to morale however. The catastrophic outcome of the Arnhem operation and the loss of 96 bombers on a disastrous raid to Nuremburg at the end of March were indications that the war could well continue for some time yet. The Arnhem operation in particular, coming as it did, late in the year amidst many successes, seems to have had a salutary effect on the morale of Tyneside.[1005] Despite this the community remained optimistic and cheerful, as is shown by the fine record established in relations between the area and the many American troops who were billeted on Tyneside.[1006]

Throughout this period, when victory was all but inevitable, many were turning their thoughts to the future. The recommendations of the Beveridge Report,

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[1004] *Ibid*, August 13th 1944.
[1005] *Ibid*, 5th October 5th 1944.
[1006] *Ibid*, April 21st – May 18th 1944.

combined with the greater political and social awareness engendered by the war, were being actively supported in the face of governmental dithering. The people of Tyneside remembered the agonies of the inter-war depressions and wanted no repeat. However, the war had given a reprieve to the heavy industries that were failing during the 1930s and many correctly assumed that this boom time would not last much longer than the war itself. For example, plans were drawn up for change at Vickers-Armstrongs Naval Yard, but were hampered by the available machinery and, perhaps more tellingly, by the skills deficit of the workforce. The yard prided itself on building large ships, the battleships and aircraft carriers of the early part of the century, but there was now little demand for such units. It was thought that there might be a market for large shipping liners after the war and initial plans were laid to cater for this trade.[1007] During 1945, although industrial unrest continued, it would appear that morale was maintained and the VE Day celebrations were described as being thankful and "comparatively quiet".[1008] In view of this, can it be said that Tyneside, along with many other areas of the country, had 'taken it'?

From the official reports the answer would appear to be in the affirmative. In terms of morale it is fair to say that the area seems to have sustained a relative buoyancy throughout the war. Unlike the national norm it would appear that morale was high in the area from the very outset. This could be explained by the fact that the war had brought fuller employment to the region and this cast a positive light after the shadows of the depression. The most difficult year in terms of morale was almost certainly 1941 with heavy and sustained attacks damaging many part of the area and causing substantial casualties. Despite this there were positives that persisted throughout this most difficult year. There was little or no panic, no-one took to the

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[1007] Scott, J D, *Vickers*, pp 301-312.
[1008] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, May 18th 1945.

shelters and stayed there, and trekking was never a great problem on Tyneside. Calmness; cheerfulness; support for leaders; neighbourly feeling; continuing high-productivity; large numbers of willing voluntary workers; and the belief in ultimate victory – these things, which were seen as key indicators of good morale, were all displayed throughout the war on Tyneside. Alongside these positive virtues, however, were examples of grumbling; willingness to unfairly apportion blame; high levels of absenteeism; steadily worsening industrial relations; apathy; and pessimism, all indicative of low morale. The greatest threat, from the above list, was the industrial unrest that persisted. However, the majority of these actions were not well supported by the public, were of short duration, and of limited impact.

How do we unite these opposite ends of the morale spectrum? The official determination of morale on Tyneside was unstintingly praising in its descriptions of the population and its resolve. It would seem that, despite the negatives, the people of Tyneside maintained a high standard of morale for much of the war with occasional troughs. Usually these low points were a result of bad war news or of particularly bad air raids on the area and the standards quickly recovered. Tyneside, and its people, had 'taken it', now they awaited the rewards for which they had struggled.

Conclusion

Areas of Further Interest

Research undertaken in the preparation of this thesis has pointed up several interesting conclusions. The first is that the importance of the region to the national war effort has never been thoroughly highlighted. Tyneside contributed huge numbers of men, material, and expertise to the war effort. This regional research is useful in that it demonstrates how the trajectory of wartime experience can vary according to local factors. As such, whilst this research could be considered a microhistory, it also makes a significant contribution to our developing knowledge of how Total War can affect an entire nation.

Despite the completion of research for this thesis there are many areas within this field that would benefit from further academic study. The industrial importance of the area cannot be overstated and there are several important topics that would benefit from deep, scholarly study. The continuing popularity of service in the Merchant Navy remains a little researched topic, one which is of prime importance to the social and industrial make-up of the region. The heavy casualties suffered by Tyneside residents in this service are indicative of the substantial numbers of Geordies who sailed under the red ensign during the war (indeed the service proved to be just as popular during peacetime). The merchant service played a large role in many Tyneside families, especially those from the communities along the banks of the River Tyne. This went hand-in-hand with the importance of the deep-sea fishing fleet to the mouth of the Tyne, and northwards, along the coast. Again, very little research has been undertaken in this area.

The effect of the war on women is a topic which has been researched comprehensively at a national level but there has been relatively little work on the specific effect of the war on Geordie women.[1009] In a traditionally masculine dominated area, such as Tyneside, the, so-called, emancipatory effect of the war on womenfolk would appear to have been considerably lessened. What is more, much of the existing research concentrates to a large degree on the gains made by women in the workplace as a result of wartime demands. Remarkably little attention has been paid to the social ramifications of the war on Tyneside women with regard to their domestic duties.[1010] Rationing, long hours, the absence of loved-ones, all combined to make the war, for many women, a wearisome and worrying time. There has also been little research into those Tyneside women who found themselves part of the armed forces during the war.

As this research has discovered, the social impact of the war on Tyneside was immense. Many of the fields, which have been the subject of past research, have considered subjects only at a national level. The importance of regional studies in the fields of evacuation (particularly with relation to the wholesale evacuation of local schools), relations with foreigners, wartime fundraising, and the impact on civil liberties, has often been overlooked.[1011] Indeed, so far as research into evacuation on Tyneside is concerned, there is huge scope for a detailed survey involving the techniques of the oral historian, as many of the participants are still capable of contributing their own experiences. Tyneside, and indeed the north-east region in

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[1009] For one such example, see: Knox, E, 'Women, Work and Culture on Tyneside, 1900-1980', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1996. Also Knox, E, 'Keep Your Feet Still Geordie Hinnie', in Colls, R, and Lancaster, B (eds), *Geordies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp 92-112.

[1010] Although dealing with the topic in a national sense, see Parker, K L, 'Women MP's, Feminism and Domestic Policy in the Second World War', unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford University, 1995.

[1011] For some local examples of school evacuation policy and experiences, see TWAS: 1634. Church high Girl's School, evacuation correspondence, 1939-1942. Also TWAS: E/NC19. Todds Nook County Primary School, papers re: evacuation to Arnside and admissions and billeting registers, 1940-1942.

general, is an excellent location for the research of such topics due to the unique characteristics found in the area, and due to the plethora of locally available primary material that can be found in the local archives.

Although this research has remained solely within the borders of Tyneside, the neighbouring areas of Northumberland, Teeside (with its chemical and steel industries), and Wearside (another shipbuilding and repairing centre), would all benefit from similar research, as relatively little work has currently been completed in these locations. Indeed, the study of the war with regard to Northumberland throws up some interesting possibilities in the field of rural history. The war had significant effects on the rural economy of Britain and, as a large agrarian county, Northumberland would represent an exceptional case study.[1012] Whilst, for those interested in military history, the defence plan for the Northern Region, including Tyneside, would be a long-term research project. Incorporating the regular Army, Royal Navy, Home Guard, Auxiliary Units, other volunteers, and the building of defensive fortifications, this is another area in which little research has been performed.

Rebuilding would be a priority for any post-war government and this, when combined with the political pressures brought to bear by the people themselves, is also an under-researched aspect of Tyneside culture, another aspect that would benefit from thorough research. Such a study, combining the resurgent political idealism of the period with the history of the local economy, and the enthusiasm for planning that developed during the war, would represent an important contribution to the area's history.

[1012] See Wilt, A F, *Food for War. Agriculture and Rearmament in Britain before the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp 223-232.

Tyneside at the End of the War

As the war ended, Tyneside found itself in a somewhat ambiguous position. Whilst the heavy industries were still experiencing great success it was increasingly clear that this would not last and that in order to prosper in the times of peace changes were necessary. The greatest need was for diversification of the industrial make-up of the area. The Tyneside workforce continued to be dominated by the heavy industries. In 1944 these industries accounted for more than 57% of all employed males on Tyneside. When added to the distributive trades and local government figures of 15% it becomes apparent that the area had only 27% of its male workforce available for the developing small manufacturing industries.[1013] New industries had been founded to a limited extent and more women were employed in the area than had been the case before the war, it was estimated that new developments at the Team Valley Industrial Estate accounted for approximately 10,000 new jobs, 50% of them taken by women.[1014] Despite some gains being made in this field by Tyneside women the area still lagged behind other parts of the country. A post war survey of the area stated that there was "no substantial women's factory industry on Tyneside and there has been even less opportunity for work in such factories in the neighbouring countryside."[1015] More than half of the women who were employed in the area worked in the distributive, catering, or laundry industries.[1016]

The post-war report on Tyneside by the Board of Trade is damning in its indictment of the areas over-dependence upon the heavy industries of the past. It is

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[1013] NA: BT 64/3260. Post-War Survey of Tyneside, 1944, p 3.
[1014] *Ibid*, Report on Tyneside, General Characteristics of the Area, 1943, p 6.
[1015] *Ibid*, Post-War Survey of Tyneside, 1944, p 3.
[1016] *Ibid*.

clear that the wartime situation of increased demand for the goods produced by these concerns achieved little and, indeed, served to worsen Tyneside's post-war prospects by stifling development in other areas of industry. Despite growing employment in the engineering fields the Board of Trade inspectors concluded that "The war has not brought any new industry to Tyneside."[1017] If the area was to prosper in peacetime it would require both substantial government investment and good local management of resources. Whilst it has been claimed that the war served to level class differences, there was no guarantee that such levelling, especially when it was related to wartime wage structures, would last beyond the conflict. It is true that many manual workers, especially those in fields such as engineering, were financially better off during the war. This was largely due to increased wages, a lack of consumer goods, and the demand for overtime work. However, such benefits were often balanced by the numbers of working class families who had members in the forces, and who, as a result, received relatively little income. One historian has argued that by examining the ownership of property a more pessimistic overview is discernible: there was "very little movement out of the working class via accumulation, and it [the war] may even have encouraged the widening of property differentials".[1018]

Governmental resources were, however, stretched and Tyneside was only one area demanding increased funding. With an estimated 500,000 houses destroyed or damaged beyond repair, demand, across the nation for materials and funding was high.[1019] The area had not experienced destruction on the scale of many others and the need for physical rebuilding, as a result of war damage, was slight. Only in specific areas of the region, such as Tynemouth Borough, which lost 5% of it rateable

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[1017] *Ibid*, p 18.
[1018] Summerfield, P, 'The 'levelling of class'', in Smith, H L, *War and Social Change*, pp 201-202.
[1019] Woodbury, C, 'Britain Begins to Rebuild Her Cities', *The American Political Science Review*, 41, 5 (1947), pp 901-920.

property and where sixteen schools had been seriously damaged or destroyed,[1020] was there property damage comparable to areas like Bristol (which lost 4.1% of its rateable value) or even Coventry (which lost only 3.5% of its rateable value).[1021] Whilst central government was determined that damaged city centres should be re-developed it concentrated its main efforts on three test areas: Bristol, Coventry, and Southampton.[1022] This meant that, for Tyneside, much of the onus for re-development and planning fell on the sorely tried local authorities with the result that claims for funds to make good war damage could face significant impediments due to government procrastination.[1023]

In addition to the questions surrounding the industrial future and restructuring of the area there were mounting pressures in other areas too. There were, perhaps, two dominant ideals amongst the public, on Tyneside as across much of the country. The first was that foreign relations should never again reach such a state where 'Total War' was again necessary. The second was that in the post-war Britain such things as hunger, poor medical treatment, unemployment, and class prejudice, should never again overshadow sections of society. Increased social and political awareness, combined with a swing to the left of the political spectrum, had led many Tyneside residents, during 1941-1943, to embrace membership of the BCP. This was reflected in the increased financial circumstances of the local party and in the increasing frequency, and popularity, of meetings being held in the area.[1024] This had faded away by the end of the war but many Tyneside residents had retained a belief in the

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[1020] TWAS: T15/1494A. Tynemouth County Borough Council ARP Files, January 1949.
[1021] Hasegawa, J, *Re-planning the Blitzed City Centre: A Comparative Study of Bristol, Coventry and Southampton, 1941-50* (Oxford: Open University Press, 1992), pp 28-29.
[1022] Hasegawa, J, *Re-planning*, p 3.
[1023] TWAS: T15/1494A. Tynemouth County Borough Council ARP Files, report on repairs to damaged fish quay at North Shields, October 1947.
[1024] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of Reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, November 21st 1941.

efficacy of more socially beneficial policies such as those advised by Beveridge and voiced this belief in the large Labour vote during the post-war election.

Contrary to popular perception Tyneside was not an area traditionally dominated by the Labour Party. The area, especially Newcastle itself, had an established Liberal reputation through much of its history. In the aftermath of the First World War the Labour Party made significant gains in the number of local councillors it possessed in Newcastle. By 1921 the party had seventeen councillors, compared to just nine in 1915. In a reaction to this threat the Liberals and Conservative, long-time enemies, had allied themselves against the local Labour Party. This split in political loyalties tended to develop around class lines. Labour supporters were often workers from the traditional heavy industries whilst their opponents were largely composed of business and professional men.[1025] The anti-socialist forces, named the Progressives, managed to keep the Labour Party in opposition from the mid-1930s.

In common with the general election the council elections of 1945 saw the Labour Party make big gains. For the first time the party won control of Newcastle Town Hall. "James Clydesdale, who had been blind since the age of eight, led the victorious Labour councillors. Elected to the Council in 1922, he now became Labour's first Lord Mayor."[1026] In addition to the impressive gains made in the council chambers, the party also managed to win three of the constituencies in Newcastle.[1027] This change in the political sway of the area can be partially explained by the growing interest in government intervention and the determination to build a new society laid out in the 1941 idea of 'A Plan for Britain', as published by the

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[1025] Todd, N, 'Ambition and Harsh Reality – Local Politics ... Local Politicians', in Ayris, I, *et al*, *Water under the Bridges*, p 96.
[1026] *Ibid*, p 97.
[1027] *Ibid.*

Picture Post.[1028] Although the definition of working-class areas of Tyneside as a Labour stronghold has now been widely accepted, it was not always so. Many of those employed in the traditional industries were of a conservative outlook and some voted accordingly.[1029] This changed disproportionately during the war with the result that the region rapidly acquired a reputation as a Labour area. In the 1945 election the "working classes of the declining areas of heavy industry [such as Tyneside] joined forces through the ballot-box with much of the more prosperous working class in the Midlands and South-East, and a substantial section of the urban middle classes."[1030] Ironically the only Conservative gain in the election came at Berwick, the Liberal who was defeated was Beveridge.

A later factor that helped to maintain strong socialist feeling in the region was the reorganisation of the area's local government. The social cleavage of Tyneside, caused by the existence of numerous small and independent local authorities had long been criticised.[1031] It was believed that only a large, and well-resourced, system of local government could overcome the difficulties faced by the area. As a result of this policy Newcastle upon Tyne absorbed several smaller municipal areas.[1032] These areas were often reliant on heavy industry and contained a large proportion of working-class, labour-inclined, voters. Despite this factor the Progressives managed to fight back and succeeded in ousting Labour from control of Newcastle Council in 1949, when there was evenly balanced support for both the Progressives and Labour.[1033]

[1028] Stevenson, J, 'Planner's Moon? The Second World War and the planning movement', in Smith, H L, *War and Social Change*, p 58.
[1029] For a discussion of working-class conservatives, see Nordlinger, E A, *The Working Class Tories* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).
[1030] Addison, P, *The Road to 1945* (London: Quartet, 1982), p 268.
[1031] NA: HO 187/163. Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government in the Tyneside Area, 1937-1938.
[1032] Todd, N, 'Ambition and Harsh Reality', p 95.
[1033] *Ibid*, p 97.

The necessities of wartime had coerced the government to run the economy in a much more direct manner than had hitherto been the case. The enthusiasm for planning that developed as a result of the war continued into the period of peace that followed. Indeed, it has been said that the "idea of 'planning' was an important component of ... immediate post-war radical political consciousness."[1034] Increased state intervention and a "more collectivist solution to the nation's pre-war problems has been properly identified as part of the legacy of the 'people's war'."[1035] This filtered down to the immediate post-war reactions of regional governmental bodies. On Tyneside, the local authorities reacted by enlarging their planning departments and forming planning committees. In Newcastle a pamphlet was created during 1945 which declared the city's planning aims as being to produce a controlled and efficient environment that would benefit industry and recreation.[1036] This willingness to manage the city was more incredible in that it had previously demonstrated marked unwillingness to interfere, even going so far as to refuse to open cinemas on Sundays for locally billeted troops.[1037]

The Reactions of the People of Tyneside

Undoubtedly, the people of Tyneside proved resilient throughout the war. They showed determination to continue with their lives as normally as was possible under the circumstances. Dances and other places of entertainment received "phenomenal patronage", even throughout the worst phases, when war weariness was

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[1034] Byrne, D, 'The Reconstruction of Newcastle', in Colls, R, and Lancaster, B, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, p 342.
[1035] Stevenson, J, 'Planner's Moon? The Second World War and the planning movement', in Smith, H L, *War and Social Change*, p 59.
[1036] *Ibid*, pp 341-343.
[1037] Todd, N, 'Ambition and Harsh Reality', in Ayris, I, *et al*, *Water under the Bridges*, pp 91-92.

described as a morale-sapping factor in other parts of the country.[1038] Whilst industrial unrest and weariness did show signs of eroding morale during the final period of the war the relaxation of restrictions by the authorities proved to be a popular move that enabled people to recapture some of the normality that had been missing from their everyday lives for more than five years.[1039] Despite experiencing sometimes heavy raiding and loss of life on an unevenly distributed but considerable scale, the attitude of the majority of those on Tyneside remained one of grim determination. Morale was described as excellent at the commencement of hostilities, despite the fear of an all-out bombing attack, and remained steady despite the military blows that affected the country during the first few years of the conflict. It would appear that although confidence dipped considerably at times (especially with the failure of the Norway campaign and the Battle of France) the people of Tyneside were quick to recover their spirits. Local factors again seemed to play a more important role in the morale of the people, as news involving substantial numbers of men from the region, such as the actions of the 50th Division, was treated with much greater seriousness than that which did not affect the area specifically.[1040] The losses experienced by groups with a large proportion of local men, such as the Merchant Navy,[1041] could and did cause consternation on Tyneside with a subsequent harmful effect on the confidence of the residents. Events which highlighted the importance of their own contribution were also motivational factors to the people of Tyneside and when the loss of *HMS Repulse* and *HMS Prince of Wales* was announced it was greeted on Tyneside with "consternation especially as residents of Tyneside

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[1038] TWAS: PA/NC/5/55. Summary of reports, Newcastle upon Tyne, January 5th 1943.
[1039] *Ibid*, December 29th 1944.
[1040] *Ibid*, July 17th 1942.
[1041] *Ibid*.

recognised the value of such ships."[1042] The loss apparently encouraged the workers in the shipyards to redouble their efforts and made them feel that they were making a vital contribution to the war effort.[1043]

Thus it would appear that, although the majority of Tyneside was steadfastly committed to the national war effort, regional factors could assume a disproportionate importance. The actions of the local authorities and the central government initiatives, designed to maintain public spirits, appear by and large to have been successful. Post-raid services functioned relatively smoothly on Tyneside and this, allied with the determination of the people themselves to play a proactive role in wartime society, enabled the majority of residents to maintain a high standard of confidence, despite the, at times, hard knocks that were suffered. The prevailing attitude was one of stoic acceptance, coupled with a determination to be seen to be 'not letting the side down'. Despite the suffering "people just got on with life as best they could."[1044] The determination to appear outwardly confident meant that it was "not 'done' to show grief in public".[1045] Confidence was exhibited to such a degree that, despite the setbacks one young man recalled that throughout the war "we all knew we were going to win it. It never occurred to us that we could lose."[1046]

[1042] *Ibid*, December 19th 1941.
[1043] For a discussion of the importance that naval ships played in the mentality of the British public see: Harrington, R, 'The Mighty Hood: Navy, Empire, War at Sea and the British National Imagination 1920-1960', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38, 2 (2003), pp 171-185.
[1044] Correspondence from Mrs Doreen Barton, 2001.
[1045] Correspondence from Mrs E Carter, 2001.
[1046] North Shields Library website [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk/Memories/memory_116.html], April 2004.

Appendix A[1047]

List i. *Details of Vessels Lost by Moor Line.*

SS Alnmoor: Left Halifax bound for Glasgow, presumed lost in mid-Atlantic on February 15th 1941. No survivors from a crew of 41.

SS Blythmoor: Sunk while berthed by torpedo fire on April 10th 1940 during Battle Of Narvik. Fourteen men rescued, 27 interned in Sweden.

SS Castlemoor: Left Halifax bound for Middlesbrough. Last reported sighting on February 25th 1940, lost with no survivors from 42 man crew.

SS Dalemoor: Bombed and set afire by enemy aircraft on June 13th 1941 when five miles off Aberdeen. Damaged but successfully repaired. Eight killed. Later struck a mine off the Humber and sank.

SS Eastmoor: Torpedoed and sunk on March 31st 1942 off Norfolk, Virginia. 35 Men rescued but sixteen killed.

MV Glenmoor: Torpedoed and sunk in Atlantic on November 27th 1940 whilst 230 miles off the west coast of Ireland. Two survivors, 31 killed.

[1047] All details from TWAS: DX1054/1. Book of Remembrance for the firms Walter Runciman and Moor Line, 1939-1945.

MV Jedmoor: Torpedoed and sunk in Atlantic on September 16th 1941 approximately 110 miles off Outer Hebrides. Six rescued, 31 killed.

MV Northmoor: Torpedoed and sunk off South African coast on May 17th 1943. The ship sank in two minutes with the loss of twelve lives, 26 men were saved.

SS Orangemoor: Torpedoed and sunk in Channel on May 31st 1940 (en-route to Tyne). Eighteen killed.

SS Pearlmoor: Torpedoed and sunk in Atlantic on July 19th 1940. Ship sank in under two minutes. 26 crewmen saved, thirteen killed.

MV Vinemoor: Sunk in Atlantic on July 26th 1940. No loss of life.

SS Yorkmoor: Sunk off US Atlantic coast by gunfire after running battle with an enemy submarine on May 27th 1942. All of the crew were saved.

SS Zurichmoor: Left Halifax on May 21st 1942 bound for St Thomas. Believed lost to enemy action on May 24th 1942. Entire crew, 45 men, perished.

List ii. *Vessels lost whilst being managed by Walter Runciman & Co. on behalf of the Ministry of Transport.*

SS Empire Adventure: Lost on September 20th 1940, 21 killed.

SS Empire Beaumont: Lost on September 13th 1942, 5 killed.

SS Empire Blessing: Lost on March 19th 1945, no loss of life.

MV Empire Dawn: Lost on September 12th 1942, 27 killed and 19 were held as prisoners of war by the Japanese.

SS Empire Haven: Lost on August 9th 1943, 1 killed.

MV Empire Statesman: Lost on December 5th 1940, 32 killed.

SS Ocean Vagabond: Lost on January 10th 1943, 1 killed.

SS Samselbu: Lost on March 19th 1945, no loss of life.

Appendix B[1048]

Table i. *Newcastle Council Spending on ARP.*

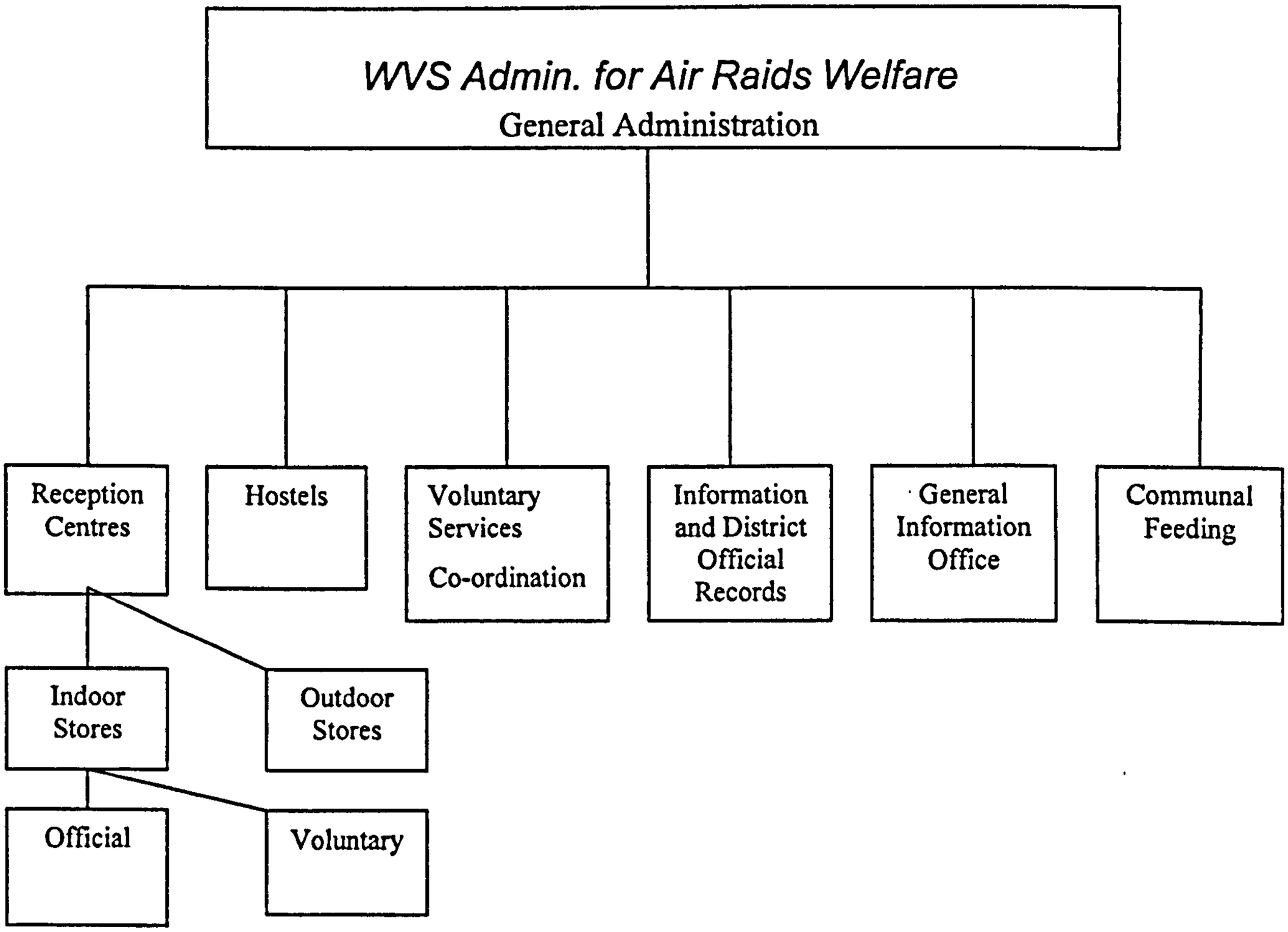
£	S	D	Years
55	7	9	1936-1937
522	19	6	1937-1938
345	19	11	1938-1939
924	7	2	Total

Table ii. *Breakdown of Newcastle Council Spending on ARP.*

1936-1937			1937-1938			1938-1939			
£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	
40	5	0	69	1	5	17	19	5	ARP Courses & Demonstrations
			13	2	5				Deputation expended
			28	19	8				Hiring of grounds etc
14	1	8	160	6	7	22	11	4	Printing / Stationery / Postage
			49	6	0				Clothing
1	1	1	35	3	0	1	9	0	Wood / Steel etc
			30	9	10				Maps and Plans
			10	10	1	1	14	10	Refreshments
			1	4	9				Chemical Requisites
			65	0	2	41	9	10	Alterations
						158	17	5	Furnishings
			55	13	10				Insurance
			4	1	9	22	3	5	Miscellaneous Costs
						36	19	7	Typists / Caretakers wages
						28	10	0	Typewriters
						14	5	1	AFS Medical Exams
55	7	9	522	19	6	345	19	11	

[1048] All figures in this appendix are from TWAS: MD/NC/276/1. Minutes and Reports from the Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne Watch Committee (ARP).

Table iii. *WVS Air Raids Welfare Committee Organisational Chart.*



Appendix C[1049]

Table i. *Aliens Resident in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1939-1940.*

Nationality	Total
American	24
Armenian	1
Austrian	6
Belgian	16
Chilean	3
Chinese	7
Czechoslovakian	24
Danish	286
Dutch	12
Egyptian	2
Finnish	1
French	17
German	53
Greek	8
Hungarian	1
Icelandic	1
Italian	74
Latvian	3
Lithuanian	1
Norwegian	180
Polish	66
Portuguese	1
Romanian	7
Russian	146
Spanish	8
Stateless	1
Swedish	57
Swiss	15
Siamese	1
Turkish	3
Total	1025

[1049] All figures in tables i-vi are taken from TWAS: PA/NC/5/24. Newcastle City Police files re: Aliens.

Table ii. *List of Resident Aliens in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1939-1940.*

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
American	16	4	20
Armenian	1		1
Austrian	2	1	3
Belgian	10	5	15
Chilean	3		3
Chinese	4	1	5
Czechoslovakian	1		1
Danish	20	6	26
Dutch	6	5	11
French	7	10	17
German	11	16	27
Greek	3		3
Italian	31	41	72
Latvian	1	1	2
Norwegian	16	7	23
Polish	4	2	4
Romanian	4	3	7
Russian	73	73	146
Spanish	1	2	3
Swedish	6	3	9
Swiss	15		15
Siamese	1		1
Turkish	2		2
Total	236	180	416

Table iii. *Conditional Landings Residing in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1939-1940.*

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
American	2	2	4
Austrian	2	1	3
Chinese	2		2
Czechoslovakian	11	12	23
Danish	12	4	16
German	13	13	26
Greek	5		5
Hungarian	1		1
Egyptian	2		2
Italian		2	2
Lithuanian	1		1
Norwegian	3	1	4
Polish	27	31	58
Portuguese		1	1
Spanish		1	1
Stateless		1	1
Swedish		1	1
Turkish	1		1
	82	70	152

Table iv. *Alien Seamen Resident in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1939-1940.*

Nationality	Total
Belgian	1
Danish	244
Dutch	1
Finnish	1
Icelandic	1
Latvian	1
Norwegian	153
Polish	4
Spanish	4
Swedish	47
	457

Table v. *Aliens aged 16 to 18 residing in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1939-1940.*

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Austrian	1		1
Belgian		1	1
Czechoslovakian	1	2	3
Italian		1	1
Polish	2		2
	4	4	8

Table vi. *Summary of Aliens Resident in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1939-1940.*

Category	Male	Female	Total
Old Resident	236	180	416
Conditional Landing	82	70	152
Alien Seamen	457		457
	775	250	1025

Table vii. *Civilian Casualties by Gender.*[1050]

Gender	Casualties	Percentage
Male	402	56%
Female	317	44%

[1050] Information given in table vii-x is culled from the Index to the "Civilian War Dead Roll of Honour" for Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire website [http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/Indexes/NE_WarDead/], 2004.

Table viii. *Civilian Casualties by Age.*

Age Range	Number	Percentage
0-15	136	19%
16-35	212	30%
36-65	300	42%
66+	68	9%

Table ix. *Female Casualties by Age.*

Age Range	Number	Percentage
0-15	62	20%
16-35	102	32%
36-65	123	39%
66+	30	9%

Table x. *Male Casualties by Age.*

Age Range	Number	Percentage
0-15	74	19%
16-35	110	28%
36-65	177	44%
66+	38	9%

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Interviews and Accounts

Mr R Anderson (North Shields); Mrs B Armstrong (North Shields); Mr J Armstrong (Newcastle); Mr R Armstrong (North Shields); Ms M Arthur (North Shields); Mrs D

Barton (Newcastle); Mrs L Bennett (Gateshead); Mrs I Birch (Morpeth); Mrs P Blaylock (Newcastle); Mr G Bond (Whitley Bay); Mr J L Burrows (Newcastle); Mr K Carr (Canterbury); Mrs E Carter (Wallsend); Mrs S Cassidy (Berwick); Mr T Cassidy (Berwick); Mr D Charlton (Newcastle); Mr K Christie (Whitley Bay); Mr M Creigh (Gateshead); Mrs A Crighton (Newcastle); Mr A Czupryna (Newcastle); Mr T Dickinson (Gateshead); Mrs M Donnelly (Gateshead); Mr J W C George (Newcastle); Mrs S Haldane (Newcastle); Mr A Hastie MBE (North Shields); Mr A Heward (Wallsend); Mr S Hogarth (Newcastle); Mr J A Jefferson (Gateshead); Mrs E Marshall (Lincoln); Mr D McKeown (Durham); Mr R Miley (Newcastle); Mr J Morrissey (Gateshead); Mr R Pearson (Whitley Bay); Mr R Peebles (Wallsend); Mrs M Playle (Wallsend); Mrs M Porthouse (Hebburn); Mr R Reay (Rowlands Gill); Mrs M Reid (Buckie); Mr M Robson (Ryton); Mrs P Scott (Newcastle); Mr T Smith (Gateshead); Mr D Steanson (Gateshead); Mrs B M Stewart (Benton); Mr R Storey (Newcastle); Mr E A Walker (South Shields); Mr N Wilson (Hebburn); Mr R Wilson (Gateshead); Mrs I Wood (Longbenton); Mrs N Worrall (Westerhope); Mrs K Wyatt (North Shields); Mr G Yeats (Newcastle); Mr K B Young (Gateshead). Several anonymous accounts were also received in addition to those that are featured on the North Shields Library Club website.[1051]

[1051] North Shields Library Club website [http://www.libraryclub.co.uk], 2004.